BUSINESS / B5

Taipan, sibling rivalry; why it's hot in BSP air-con office; and other 'Biz Buzz' inside the boardroom

WORLD / A25

Protesters lay siege to Thai TV in bid to oust premier

NEWS / A2

Intel/operations man, Deputy Director General Verzosa, touted as new PNP chief

Hercules goes down in Davao Gulf; 9 missing

By Terra Quiamanda and Nikko Dizon
in Manila,
and Jeanlle R. Badilla, Inquirer Mindanao

AS THE WORKHORSE C-130 TRANSport plane roared into the night sky, the veteran pilot advised air traffic control at Davao City that he was turning left on a time-tested path toward Iloilo, an hour's flying time away.

Then the Hercules plane—one of only two operational C-130s in the Philippine Air Force's fleet—was heard from en route.

Some 14 hours after the aircraft pi-

HERCULES A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, August 27, 2008 ★ 8 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 261 P18 www.inquirer.net

Respect our domain, 'lumad' tell Moro rebs

By Ma. Cecilia Rodriguez
Inquirer Mindanao

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—"LUMAD" leaders yesterday called on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to uphold an unclear pact that, they said, clearly defined the areas of the Moro and the in-

RESPECT A10

WHAT'S COOKING Even during a hot pursuit operation and under driving rain in Brgy. Lapayan, Linamon, Lanao del Norte, 3 soldiers have to take time out to cook. EDWIN BACASMAS

Death toll mounts in Mindanao clashes

By Nash B. Maulana
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—SARANYA Dimodomang, 39, ran out of her house along with her husband and two children on Friday afternoon after a loud explosion went off in Datu Piang, where a military ground and air assault was under way.

As she dashed out of Barangay Bulanog the seven-month pregnant woman asked her husband Jubin if he had carried with him the coin bank that contained their savings.

He said he had not, that it was on an overhead board above the window of their house.

Saranya with daughter Norsyda, 15, is now out bank to get the coin bank.

"The next lethal fireball fell right next to that window and she was fatally wounded," said Jubin, 38. He told the Inquirer by phone from an evacuation center in Datu Piang that Norsyda also was wounded in the blast, which he said was from military shelling.

Saranya and Norsyda were brought to the local health center but the mother, heavy with what could

DEATH TOLL A11

PICKING UP THE PIECES A policeman shows combat boots fished from the sea on Tuesday off Davao City. Body parts were also found and other debris believed to be from the military transport plane.

FG lawyer tied to CA row

Marine panel wants Sulpicio suspended

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

REJECTING A PLEA THAT THE SINKing of the MV Princess of the Stars was "an act of God," the Board of Marine Inquiry (BMI) yesterday said Sulpicio Lines Inc. (SLI) was responsible and called for the suspension of its license to operate.

The BMI also recommended the revocation of the professional licenses of the still missing ship captain as well as the port captains of Cebu and Manila.

The Princess of the Stars sank on June 21 after it ran into a typhoon off Sibuyan Island in Romblon en route from Manila to Cebu City. All but 56 of the 864 people aboard the ferry were reported either dead or missing.

Hundreds were believed entombed

MARINE A4

RP docs, others can practice in Asean now

SINGAPORE—LICENSED FILIPINO accountants, dentists and doctors may work in other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), officials said yesterday.

Southeast Asian economic ministers have signed agreements allowing these professionals to work in each other's countries.

The Asean has already signed similar arrangements covering architects, nur-

RP DOCS A10

UNDER STRESS Before taking the stand for only the second time since the probe into the brewing Court of Appeals scandal, Justice Buenaventura Ynares is attended to by three medical people. Ynares chaired the division that decided the case in Meralco's favor. He also told the prosecutors of his confrontation with fellow justice Subic on who should rule on the Meralco case. EDWIN BACASMAS

Nothing wrong, says PCGG chair

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE CHAIR OF THE PRESIdential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) yesterday said that a lawyer of the husband of President Macapagal-Arroyo and concurrent officer of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) had called him up to ask for help in its case against Manila Electric Co. (Meralco).

Testifying before a panel that the Supreme Court created to look into impropriety at the Court of Appeals (CA) in connection with the Meralco case, Camilo Sabio identified the lawyer of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo as Jesus I. Santos, a member of the board of trustees of the GSIS.

FG LAWYER A10

Key players brought their secrets to the grave

By Fe Zamora

(Last of a series)

(Editor's Note: This final part of the series is based on interviews with lawyer Virgilio Pablico, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detective Group (CIDG) legal division; ex-Col. Fe-

lix Avelino, former commander of the Presidential Guards, the unit formed component of the Presidential Security Command (PSC); retired Col. Marlou Kintghak, former chief of the Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police (PC-INP) component attached to the Aviation Security Command (Avescom); retired Mlgt. Ruben Custodio/ahan, the driver of the SWAT van; and the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) chaplain, Msgr. Roberto Olaguer. This series is based on a forthcoming Inquirer book on the Aug. 21, 1983, assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr.)

WHEN MSGR. ROBERTO OLAGUER was first assigned as chaplain at the New Bilibid Prison in 1990, he had one "mission" from Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin: Find the truth about the Aquino assassination from the 16 soldiers convicted of the crime.

Olaguer did as he was told.

KEY PLAYERS A6

THE PERSONAL IS ELECTRIFYING In her keynote speech on the 1st day of Democratic National Convention, Michelle Obama tells of her and husband Barack's American story. Their daughters are Sasha and Malia. AP

Michelle Obama, Kennedy electrify Democrats

DENVER, COLORADO—Michelle Obama spoke of love of family and country—a bookend speech to one by an ailing but impassioned Sen. Edward Kennedy—as Democrats convened to nominate Barack Obama and pass the torch to a candidate who would be the first African American president.

With Republican opponent John McCain drawing even in a presidential contest marked by a nasty back-and-forth of television attack ads, the Democrats on Monday crafted a seamless opening of their four-day national convention, the symbolic start of a historic two-month campaign for the White House.

The convention offers a chance to heal wounds opened in Obama's bruising battle with Hillary Rodham Clinton and reassure voters still wary of putting a political newcomer in the White House.

Michelle Obama, who has come under attack by Republicans who are trying to paint her as an unpatriotic radical, sought to turn the tables on her critics, telling a cheering crowd in Denver's Pepsi Center: "We have an obligation to fight for the world

MICHELLE A12

Nonplacer Gordon seeks ban on polls

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A SENATOR, WHO WAS LEFT out in a recent survey on possible presidential candidates in 2010, said popularity polls were part of a ploy by politicians with deep pockets to convince big-time financiers that they were the front-runners.

Sen. Richard Gordon said he planned to file a resolution that would bar a prospective candidate, who commissions the surveys, from publishing the results to avoid undue influence on the voters and poten-

NONPLACER A6

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY: Most regions, Quezon and Aurora provinces will have rain and gusty winds. The rest of Central and Southern Luzon and Visayas will enjoy sunny skies with scattered showers and thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Mostly cloudy with rain	Tuguegarao	Cloudy with rain
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with rain
Dagupan	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with rain
Legaspi	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Cloudy with rain
Puerto Princesa	Cloudy with rain	Cagayan de Oro	Partly cloudy
Zamboanga	Cloudy with rain	Davao	Partly cloudy

Temperature data not available. Weather forecast by Accu-Weather

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PNP's No. 2 set to be No. 1

Verzosa said to be a shoo-in to replace Razon as police chief

By Alexis Pape and Michael Lim Ubac

NO SURPRISE. THE COUNTRY'S SECOND HIGHEST-RANKING police official, an intelligence and operations specialist, will become the new chief of the Philippine National Police.

Palace and Camp Crame sources confirmed yesterday that Deputy Director General Jesus Verzosa, the PNP's deputy chief for administration, will take over the reins of the 120,000-strong police force by Oct. 5.

He will replace PNP chief, Director General Avelino Razon Jr., who is due for retirement on Sept. 27 when he turns 56, but who apparently is being groomed for higher things.

Malacañang sources said President Macapagal-Arroyo had no problem working with Verzosa who she has been quizzed as saying seems highly recommended for the top PNP post.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, talking to reporters in Cagayan de Oro yesterday, would not confirm the appointment ahead of the Palace announcement, but he said Verzosa was the most qualified in terms of seniority in rank and position.

According to senior PNP officers, Puno had lined the PNP succession line, starting from the nine of PNP bunch Arturo Lomibao, Oscar Calderon, Razon and ending with Verzosa.

"Any announcement of the assumption of General Verzosa would be good since it would eliminate jockeying for the position," said a senior police official.

A member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of the 1976, Verzosa has held field positions, including police commander of Caloocan, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, and the Intelligence Group. Caloocan is considered a hotbed of criminal groups operating in the area as well as Metro Manila.

The CIDG is the premier investigation unit of the PNP. The IG is the primary unit operating against terrorists and top-ranked leaders of insurgent groups like the communist New People's Army.

VERZOSA

When he headed Caloocan, Verzosa and his team crushed the Leo Bañes rape case that led to the arrest and prosecution of Antonio Sanchez, the then mayor of Caloocan, Lupetas. As CIDG chief, he handled many sensational cases including the Nida Blanca murder. As intelligence chief, Verzosa led the operations that led to the arrest of terrorist Fathur Rahman Al-Ghozi and Mobin, who was linked to the Dec. 30, 2000, bombings. He also brought down criminal groups like the Johnny Dogalog ring and the Villacer kidnap-for-ransom groups.

Sources's closest rivals for the top PNP post include two members of the PMA Class of 1975, Director Geary Barias, the chief of the National Capital Region Police Office, and Director General Samuel Rodriguez, chief of the PNP Directorial Staff and the fourth highest-ranking PNP officer.

Senior officers said the Class of 1975 tried to push for one of their members. Barias himself made a valiant attempt, even trying to elicit the support of religious groups.

The assumption of Verzosa would complete the trio of PMA Class of 1976 to the highest echelons of the police and military services. His classmates include AFP Chief Gen. Alexander Yano, Philippine Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Victor Ibrado, Navy Flag Officer-in-Charge Vice Admiral Ferdinand Rojas, Marines Commandant Maj. Gen. Jose Dolorfino, and Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Nelson Allaga.

Major commands in the PNP are also headed with Class 1976 members, including Director Leocadio Santiago, chief of the Police Community Relations Group; Director Silverio Kintanar, chief of the Directorate for Operations; Director Jaime Carlingal, Eastern Visayas provincial commander; Director Arthur Soriano, chief of the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management; Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, regional director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita confirmed that Razon would not be retiring from public service. But Malacañang has yet to find a post for the outgoing PNP chief.

Ermita said there has a post in mind for Razon, Ermita said.

"There are many posts that Art B. for him in government," he said, noting that Puno would "push for it."

The PNP chief is a valuable asset in any post, whether elective or appointive, Puno-Ermita said.

GMA: Accord must include disarming rebs

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo wants the disarming and demobilization of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels part of the talking points when peace negotiations resume.

The President said on Monday night that the issue of disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation (DDR) should be part of the comprehensive agreement of the two sides and she would enlist the help of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair on this matter.

She said Blair "often is willing to come help us" had taken part in the brokering of peace in Northern Ireland.

"The early we must begin to talk about it (DDR). We don't sweep it under the rug and when finished flinging a peace pact, they will [suddenly] not want to lay down their arms," Ms Arroyo told reporters in Pampanga.

Presidential adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza believes it is time to start discussing DDR issues—as was mooted because of recent attacks on civilian communities by three MILF commanders who were apparently frustrated over problems in the negotiations.

Memo on DDR

When the government signed a landmark 1996 peace accord with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) — the main Islamic rebel group in the southern Philippines at the time — there was no provision for disarmament, Ignorants said. Many of the guerrillas resisted their firearms and MNLF rebels attacked troops after the accord was signed.

"That's one of the lessons learned," he said. "A final peace agreement must have terms on disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation."

The President had issued a one-page memorandum to Dureza on the need for DDR in the peace talks and other directives on how the government should move forward in the peace process.

In her memorandum dated Aug. 19, she reminded that DDR "will be the overall framework governing our engagements with armed groups in peace talks...DDR, as opposed by the communities, will be a reduction in armed groups of their capacities of armed struggle, and is one of showing that the force of arms does not entitle them to represent our people."

Ms Arroyo said the conflict in Lanao del Norte that resulted from attacks by MILF forces on communities drove "highlighted the need for a new premium on our peace efforts."

She stressed that the government will now focus not only on negotiating with armed groups "but, more importantly, on an [honest] dialogues with the people in the communities" and that these dialogues will be "renewed on ending all forms of armed rebellion in the country."

Consult the people

"By talking directly with the people, we aim to generate a national consensus against armed struggle as a means of achieving political and societal change," President Arroyo said.

The government's governing our negotiations, particularly in defining national dialogue, will be a balance between constitutionality and public sentiment."

As for the controversial memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain, she said the government would "observe a supporting role and let credible institutions supportive of the peace effort spearhead the consultations."

The President directed Ingeson to help in the consultations and dialogues to be undertaken by Muslims-based bishops and the Ulama League of the Philippines, which she had earlier prodded to give the government a hand in moving forward the peace process.

In an interview with reporters in Pampanga, Ms Arroyo said the capture of MILF commanders Cadapan Kato and Abdullah Macapaar alias Commander Bravo was not a condition for the resumption of the talks.

Although the President conceded it would be a sign of good faith on the part of the MILF leadership to surrender the murder suspects wanted for the bloody attacks in General Mamanwa, she stressed it was the duty of law enforcers to pursue them. With a report from AP

MOA part of political settlement, says SolGen

By Jaymee Anong

THE GOVERNMENT HAS MAINTAINED ITS plea to the Supreme Court to dismiss the case questioning the validity of the proposed Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domains between the government peace panel with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

In a 40-page comment on the petitioners' opposition to law thgs. 19 manifestation and motion, Solicitor General Agnes Devanadera yesterday reiterated that the MOA-AD did not violate the basic principles of contract law as it was a political agreement that is not generic, or unique on its own.

She said the government sees the MOA-AD, once signed, as one that cannot be treated as purely falling under the contract law, but as a part of "a political settlement with legal consequences."

The MOA-AD is being questioned for various reasons by the province of North Cotabato, the cities of Zamboanga and Iligan, Sen. Mar Roxas, former Sen. Franklin Drilon, and opposition spokesperson Adel Tamano.

The Supreme Court earlier issued a temporary restraining order on the Aug. 5 signing of the document in Malaysia by the government and MILF peace panels.

The Solicitor General is representing the four members of the government peace panel, including presidential adviser on the peace process Hermogenes Esperon Jr., and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

Devanadera said the Zamboanga City officials and the third parties led by Drilon "keep on harping on 'contract law' as basis in construing the provisions of the MOA-AD.

"The MOA-AD, aside from being unsigned, is just a list of consensus points that will still be the subject of further negotiations that will lead to a final peace agreement, which will also be subject to legislative enactments and constitutional processes to implement the same. It has no legal effect, as it is now, even if it is signed," she said.

"Jurisprudence that the provisions in the MOA-AD do not conform to the Constitution, this does not make them invalid considering that they are not self-executing. Moreover, the MOA-AD itself recognizes the provisions requiring possible amendments to the Constitution and thus they shall be necessary only after effecting the necessary changes to the legal framework," Devanadera added.

The Solicitor General also stressed that the peace negotiation powers of the President is a political question that is beyond judicial review. She argued that the power to negotiate peace agreements with the MILF is a function of the Executive Department, that is rooted in the power of the President to execute laws and to maintain peace and order.

"The MOA-AD being negotiated by the respondents with the MILF is part of the peace agenda of the Executive Department, is but an exercise by the President of its power to execute laws to ensure that peace and order is maintained," Devanadera said.

'Let things die down first'

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE Moro rebels should wait for at least two years before signing a proposed memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain to allow for a comprehensive national discussion of the issue, said a former member of the government peace panel.

Fe Hilbero Mercado, who was privy to the early discussions of the MOA, said the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front had opting on a unpleasant surprise on the nation when they revealed the contents of a peace agreement that was initialed at without consultation.

The proposed agreement, which provides for the creation of a separate Bangsamoro state, has divided the country and has caused a "national insanity" that has made it nearly impossible to discuss the matter objectively and rationally, said Mercado, a lead assessor of the National Peace Council in Coronado City.

He said it would be better to wait for the heightened tensions to die before taking up the pact again to prevent an escalation of the fighting.

He said it might be best also for the Supreme Court to issue a temporary restraining order against the treaty for two years.

Kristine C. Alave

Anyone can get a better body

Did you know that an apple or a pear could be unhealthy? Quite possible – if the fruit refers to the shape of your body. According to Dr. Hadji Palaruan of Marie France, "Body types are determined by the fat distribution. Some people may have a predisposition to store fat in the upper area or bottom area, while others store fat all over the body. Hence the variations of apple shapes, pear shapes or straight figures."

Who you are = your body shape? Genetics have a big role in determining where you are more inclined to store fat in your body. Take a look at your parents. You might get a clue as to what shape you're more inclined to.) Gender also plays a part in fat distribution, because it is also influenced by concentrations of estrogen in the body. For instance, normal pre-menopausal female estrogen levels will cause the body to store fat in the buttocks, thighs and hips.

Categorizing the body types. If you have a large waist and abdomen, a thick neck and wide shoulders, then you are an accurate description of the apple shaped body. This top-heavy body type is linked with health problems such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure and gall bladder disease.

Pear shapes on the other hand, store fat in the hips and bottom area. They are more at risk for severe menopause symptoms and osteoporosis. If your figure seems more rectangular, and fat is equally distributed throughout your body, you are a straight shape body type. Straight shapes lack feminine curves and look boxy. "Regardless of one's body shape, having excess weight will always have health risks," Dr. Palaruan points out.

Dressing for your shape? **Anne, 31,** has an apple shaped body and has always had trouble finding tops that fit. "When I wear tight-fitting shirts, I get conscious of my upper body. I also avoid tailored garments, especially those with defined waist bands. They only make my stomach look even bigger!" For pear shaped **Lory, 34,** trends are not always a style option. "I've been wanting to wear skinny jeans for the longest time," she says, "but they just highlight my heavy hips! So I just stick to boring loose pants." As for straight figured **Sarah, 27,** "I can't wear dresses that are either too fit or too loose. My body looks almost boxish! If I gain weight or loose weight, it just changes in size, but not in shape."

The good news is that anyone can get a better body – in spite of their shape and size! What's more, Marie France offers slimming treatments that are specialized not just for particular body types, but individuals. For your FREE consultation and body assessment, call Marie France at 894-BODY (2639), Cebu (032) 233-7637, Pampanga (045) 961-2561.

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AIDS on the rise

AIDS-RELATED INFECTIONS are rising rapidly in the Philippines although the ratio of those afflicted out of the total population is remains low, Health Secretary Francisco Duque said yesterday.

An average of 29 cases a month of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) have been reported in 2007 and 2008, compared with 20 cases a month in previous years, he told reporters in Malacañang.

"Although the Philippines remains a low-prevalence country, it should not be a reason to be complacent as statistics and trends show that the number of those infected are on the rise," he said.

A DOH report cited for a focus on "persons in activities geared toward vulnerable populations and a ended up exposure to making available affordable treatments and assisted interventions."

Duque said the main approach is a systematic AIDS epidemic even present in the Philippines with a focus on surveying the highest-risk segments of the population of 90 million reasoning "before the universal access target."

Just 46 percent of females are workers, 27 percent of injecting drug users and 49 percent of men having sex with men in other have had sex with multiple partners, and a condom.

While transmission through heterosexual contact fell to 124 last year from 190 in 2006, transmission from homosexual contact has risen 32 percent to 307 cases over the same period, a trend-lines, and contact already tripled in 74 cases, the report said. AFP

NATIONAL BUDGET

GMA seeks P1.4T for '09

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO IS ready to submit to Congress her proposed P1.4-trillion national budget for 2009, 15 percent higher than the appropriations for this year.

The President, who said she had already signed her budget message to Congress, described the proposed budget as one that "addresses the world food and fuel crisis without forgetting the economy environment and education."

She said it would be "desirable" if Congress would succeed in passing the budget bill by December but noted four-day had seen budget bills set being approved by Congress.

"I've lived many years without a budget passage," she told reporters in Pampanga last Monday.

The government had taken to call over the previous year's budget because of Congress' failure to pass the 2004 and 2005 budget bills.

The government's economic managers earlier said the proposed 2009 budget would boost infrastructure and limit the deficit to less than P40 billion, or half a percentage point of gross domestic product (GDP).

Top recipients

They also said the government has adopted a performance-based policy in the new budget, meaning those departments that performed well and were able to implement projects from the 2008 funding, would naturally get more resources in the next budget.

The top five recipients of the proposed 2009 budget are the public works and highways, agriculture, education and social welfare departments, and Hulbalds, the state medical insurance program.

As to whether the government will be able to balance the budget by next year, the President reiterated her earlier statement that "if the conditions are benign, we'll try."

Because of the recent rise in the global prices of fuel and food, the government had to increase its earlier plans to open up more oil wells to balanced budget this year and reduce the goal to 2010.

The President also said she was waiting for the task force on energy contingency led by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita to come up with the studies that would determine what programs are to be funded further from value-added tax windfall.

Instead of taking out foreign loans, the government will be using proceeds from the VAT windfall to finance a project to connect the Metro Rail Transit and the Light Rail Transit systems that would save the long travel time for LRT riders to Fernando, Quezon City, and the LRT station in Monumento. Christine O. Avendaño

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Corrections

IN THE AUG. 19 ISSUE, the front-page banner story—"41 dead in GMA7 attacks"—misspelled the name of a municipality in Lanao del Norte. The municipality is Kolambugan—not Kolambugan.

IN THE AUG. 25 ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A15 misidentified the Cabinet department headed by Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. Ebdane is the secretary of public works and highways—not department of transportation and communications, which is headed by Leandro Mendoza.

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors over story in the Day Book, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 888 Brgy. Chino Roces Avenue corner Amorsolo Street, Makati City, fax them to 896-6160, or e-mail address dayb@philippinedaily.com.ph.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, August 27, 2008
21st Week in Ordinary Time
Memoria

1st Reading: 2 Thes 3:6-10, 16-18
Gospel: Mt 23:27-32

Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs from the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are filled with dead people's bones and every kind of impurity. In the same way you appear to religious to others, but you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness within.

"Woe to you, scribes of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous. You say, 'If we lived in the time of our ancestors, we would not have joined them in the blood of prophets.' So, you testify to yourselves that you are the children of those who murdered the prophets. And you, finish off what your ancestors began!"

Commentary

Outward appearances can be deceptive, as we know so well. We can judge what is on the outside, but only God can judge the shape and size of the hearts that it.

Our integrity is compromised when our outer appearance does not match what is going on within. We are guilty of hypocrisy when outward religiosity is not matched by deeds and words of holiness and mercy.

The Lord desires holiness of heart for us. He knows that we must train our heart and mind often to give us the grace that will affect within us true transformation ongoing conversion of life.

MUNICIPALITY OF PULUPANDAN
INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

DOJ indicts 20 in PIPC investment scam

By Jerome Aning

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT yesterday indicted 20 people from directors and 16 other officers and incorporators of the Philippine Investment Protection Corp. for allegedly defrauding some 20,000 retirees of almost P1 billion in what it described as a fraudulent investment scheme.

Prosecutors found probable cause to charge the respondents, giving assistance to the complainants' charge that they lost P60 million, plus an additional P5,000, in investments that they made to dollar units for the PIPC.

Four or five other groups of PIPC investors earlier filed separate charges against the firm's officers.

Senior state prosecutor Philip Hernandez explained that prosecutors had to charge the firm's other employees and other investors who claimed to be victims also because the law requires that there should at least be five suspects in a charge of syndicated estafa, a non-bailable offense.

The main respondents were the PIPC's four top directors, Michael H.E. Lim, Cristina Ramos, Ernesto Ng and Cecilia Jurado.

Aside from the four officers, the others charged were Barbara Uselli, Anthony Kincaid, Ms. Francis Moore, Luis Aragon, Victor Jose Vargas de Dios, Ricardo Ortega, Christine Ta, Bradley Glenn Dove, Andrew Sylvester, Maryanne Contreras, Morris Barbara Thumbs" Garcia, David Chua-Uson, Marissa Gonzalez, Barbo Aragon, Nicolas Antonio Mendoza, Jose Teogen II and Ondine Santos.

Complainants

The complainants who filed the case were Richard Emerson Gran, Hadlon Gumallen, Pangilan Venancio, Montserrat Tantoco, Alejandro Perez, Hernan Guzman, Fidel Or Jesus, Edmundo Villacorta, Carolina Villanueva-Kalaykal, Mercedes Talbot, Manila Reis, Adriano Abe Garcia, Charlemagne Glen, Enrique Severino, Michelle Matthews, Gabriel Salamanog, Mario Rodriguez, Wilson Sy, Joel Sison and Regina Bonnin.

The PIPC was charged with the illegal sale of securities in the form of a "portfolio management agreement" which the Hong Kong-based firm used as a "research asset" for its foreign clientele.

He said the suspects could face a maximum penalty of life imprisonment or 40 years in jail, if found guilty in the amount involved exceeds P100,000.

A separate criminal charge filed by Manuscos was dismissed to avoid multiplicity of suits since the latter is one of the complainants in separate estafa complaints.

Conspiracy

The panel found the element of conspiracy to be present because Lim, Jurado, Ng and Arcadio allegedly managed the corporations' money and engaged in securities advisory, broker-dealer and investment house without the authority of the Securities and Exchange Commission and knowing fully well that the PIPC was registered for some other purposes.

"There is conspiracy when two or more persons come to an agreement concerning the commission of a felony and decide to commit it ... In this case, respondents Lim, Ng, Jurado and Tantoco's overt acts consisted in the actual commission of the crime through PIPC's business operations for more than seven years, and in the general indemnity they gave to each other for the furtherance of their criminal intent of defrauding the general public of their funds," the prosecutor said.

They said that while there was no evidence to show that the rest of the accused people conspired with Lim, Ng, Jurado and Tantoco, they cannot escape liability as they have knowledge about the illegal business operations.

"But since they were not the ones who conspired to engage in such [an] illegal business operation, they are only be regarded as accessories to the conspiracy," the prosecutors said.

The PIPC is alleged to have engaged in offshore foreign currency exchange trading in the Philippine branch of the PIPC-British Virgin Islands, which operates similar branches in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and Zurich, Switzerland.

The persons cited stems from an earlier syndicated estafa complaint that the SEC filed against the officers and brokers of PIPC in connection with the financial scam which is estimated to have defrauded Philippine-based investors of $116 million deposited in various investment schemes operated by the PIPC group.

Chiz to file raps vs gov't execs over car smuggling

WITH THE SECOND-HAND IMPORT BAN in force, Senator Edgardo Angara has vowed to file charges against government officials who allowed the entry of used sports cars and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) into the country.

Angara said he would file the cases before the Ombudsman next week.

Senator Francis Escudero, chairman of the Senate committee on ways and means, said he would also file charges against the officials.

Escudero

Survivors happy with decision but still mad at Sulpicio

By Maryjean C. Ortiz

IT WAS HIS LAST RIDE TO RUN after the company where diligent employee may not have succeeded in taking his life, but destroyed it just the same.

This was the impassioned resentment of 100 Princess of the Stars survivor Francisco Rubido to the Board of Marine Inquiry's report that Sulpicio Lines Inc. was accountable for the sinking of the ill-fated vessel.

Rubido, a native of Jasaan province, said that Sulpicio Lines had not given any form of financial assistance to the survivors and the families left by those who died in the ocean tragedy.

"I heard that Sulpicio gave P200,000 insurance money to the relatives of the dead," Rubido said in Filipino.

He said that he only received P250,000 from the company's insurance company as a survivor.

Small considering horror

"Real love small, considering the horror we've gone through," Rubido said.

He said he boarded the Princess of the Stars in June with the hopes of working as a life-setter in Iloilo City.

However, his P5,000 worth of work cards with the ill-starred ship. So did his dreams of a better job and a better life.

"I want Sulpicio to pay for what I could have earned as a life-setter," said Rubido, who now sells cigarettes in Cebu.

Eleanor Tria, a 38-year-old call center agent who lost her mother Gloria Cenaco in the tragedy, said the BMI's decision would strengthen the complaint they were planning to file against Sulpicio Lines.

Cenaco, a 54-year-old homemaker, was to go home to Bohol via Cebu City after attending her son's graduation in Manila.

Consolation to victims

"We are happy and thankful with the decision," Tria said, pointing out that if the ship had not left the Port of Manila on June 20, the accident should not have happened.

"The report is a consolation to the families of the victims," Tria said.

She revealed that Sulpicio Lines had just offered relatives of the victims any form of assistance aside from the insurance money, adding that the relatives were gave them a hard time while they were arranging their funerals during.

"They never reached out to us, considering that our mother was a passenger who was supposed to be in their care," Tria said.

Rosie Beaster, leader of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, who is assisting the victims in their court battle against Sulpicio Lines, said the AMO denounces would encourage more families to file complaints against the company.

"The report only gives credence to allegations that officials of the company and the ship captain could be held liable for the deaths of the passengers," Jamoren said.

THE "PRINCESS OF THE STARS" lies in shallow waters at Silanguin Isle off the coast of San Fernando town in Romblon. The bodies of scores of passengers are believed to be still trapped inside the hull of the capsized vessel. INQUIRER PHOTO

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Marine panel wants ...

From page A1

in the sunken ferry, which also earned a toxic cargo of endosulfan pesticide when it capsized in a tragedy Sulpicio blamed on divine intervention.

In a 62-page report, the BMI recommended to the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) to "consider the suspension of the certificate of public convenience (CPC) of SLI in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations."

The BMI chair, Rene Ador, Ramon Uyang explained that the CPC, which allows operations of shipping companies, covered all the ships of the company.

"Though the SLI has several vessels, all these are run by a single company. So any lack of skills among the chosen members in the above calculation from the Quality Safety Management Manual," Uyang told reporters during the promulgation of the decision.

In endorsing the BMI report to the Department of Transportation and Communications, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) commandant, Vice Adm. Wilfredo Tamayo, said Sulpicio Lines should be "held accountable administratively and further investigated for possible criminal liabilities."

But Uyang said the BMI was only mandated to determine the cause of the sinking and can only give recommendations. It cannot enforce its suggested actions.

Human error

The BMI said the sinking was primarily caused by human error, but it also blamed the company for failing to stop the ship captain from sailing despite the typhoon signal raised on its route and for failing to monitor the movement of the ship when it finally faced the onslaught of Typhoon "Frank."

"The immediate cause of the capsizing of MV Princess of the Stars was the failure of the Master to exercise extraordinary diligence and good seamanship thereby committing an error of judgment that brought MV Princess of the Stars in harm's way into the eye of Typhoon Frank," the BMI said in its report.

The BMI also found that port agencies in Manila and Cebu negligent.

The report said the Cebu port captain, Benito Pontevar, and could failed to monitor the condition of the vessel during the "critical moments from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. where the vessel may need immediate assistance" by not being relayed by reports by the PCG "where the company lost contact with the vessel."

The BMI also said the Manila port captain, Benjamin Bagtasa, was "not aware of the revised guidelines on the assessment of vessels leaving harbor anywhere" which could have been used him to discourage the ship captain from sailing.

Sulpicio execs accountable

The BMI also found Sulpicio Lines officials seaworthy. It said the shipping company's president and chief executive officer were responsible for failing to supervise their employees. The company's fleet vice president was also found negligent for allowing the ship captain to sail despite the typhoon signal.

The BMI found possible lapses by Marina.

It noted that Marina approved the conversion in 2004 of the ship's weapon deck into a passenger area to accommodate 1,000 passengers. The BMI said this affected the "watertight integrity" of the ship because the converted deck was near water surface.

The converted deck had 11 open windows. The BMI said that when the ship tilted, water flowed from these windows, possibly contributing to the sinking of the vessel.

The converted deck was locked on super-convection passengers, the BMI added.

Press Secretary Jesse Dennis yesterday welcomed the BMI report.

"Let the (act) stop be pursued," Dennis said, noting that the Office of the President would review the recommendations made by the body.

"Malacañang (the report) was one of the first on that at this point, to let the next process take its normal course. We hope for an expeditious resolution," he said, stressing that Malacañang had yet to be furnished with the report.

Cargo operations

Bagtasa said BMI's recommendation to cancel the permit to operate of Sulpicio Lines did not contradict President Macapagal-Arroyo's earlier order to allow its cargo ships to set sail.

"But President always desires to uphold the interest of the traveling public... both for passengers and cargos. We don't want to prejudge the recommendation (to BMI)," he said.

Cargo and passenger vessels of Sulpicio Lines had been grounded following the sinking of the Princess of the Stars.

But Sin Arroyo gave Sulpicio Lines the go-signal to resume cargo operations on July 3 after Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza reported to Ms. Arroyo that "it was go 'unsunk' had been created by the grounding of the vessels. With a report from Michael Lim Ubac

Nonplacer Gordon seeks ...

From page A1

ted Francisco.

"I am not sure for being left out. I have always said long ago that these surveys, whatever they are being conducted, are used to mind management because if you are high in the survey, big businessmen tend to give you space," Escudero said in a talk with reporters.

Surveys commissioned

Social Weather Stations recently conducted a survey asking respondents their preference for the highest post in the land. SWS did not give the respondents any names.

The results showed Vice President Noli de Castro, Sen. Loren Legarda and Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. in a close fight at the top choices of the respondents.

Senators Panfilo Lacson, Francis Escudero, Manuel Roxas II and Senator Pangilinan and former President Joseph Estrada were among those cited by respondents.

Gordon said that prospective candidates with resources could easily commission a dozen surveys and pick the one in which they performed the best for publication to give the impression that they were prime candidates to win the elections.

No debate

He said the Senators would not only be handicapping their bets on the leading presidential aspirants but also give the opponents an excuse not to engage the others in a debate.

"My fear is that the voters would not know the candidates anymore because the presidential hopefuls, even, would be reluctant to join any debates," Gordon said.

He cautioned the people against being fooled into making their choices based on the surveys that he said should be used as a personal guide by the prospective candidates to improve his or her weaknesses.

"We should not just believe these surveys. Remember, Obama used to lead Hillary Clinton but he beat Hillary for the Democratic nomination. Obama used to lead (Republican candidate John) McCain, now they are just even," he said.

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Business Can be simple

'Lawin' races to Bicol, threatens more rains

By TJ Burgonio in Manila and Ephrain Agaba in Southern Luzon

TROPICAL DEPRESSION "Lawin" yesterday accelerated over the Philippine Sea and threatened to bring rain and gusts of wind over northern and peninsula. But weather bureau said

The bureau said the fresh weather disturbance, with peak winds of 55 kilometers per hour, would enhance the southwest monsoon and bring rain over southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

But its immediate effect would be felt in provinces in the Bicol Region, according to the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

As of 10 a.m. yesterday, state meteorologists located the eye of tropical depression "Lawin" 290 km east of Virac, Catanduanes.

"Lawin" was moving west northwest at 15 kph, intensifying winds of up to 55 kph near the center.

In Legazpi City some 3,960 passengers were stranded in four major ports in the Bicol region. Stranded in seven Bicol ports were 20 small cars, 49 buses, 27 trucks and 19 six- wheels, said Emiljo Jeffrey Gillesh, assistant operations officer of Philippine Coast Guard in Bicol.

Public Storm Signal No. 1 had been raised in Catanduanes, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon, Burias Island, Ticao Island, Quezon, Polillo Island, Marinduque, Lubang, Rizal and Aurora.

"There will be rain and occasional gusty winds in these areas," Pagasa weather forecaster Gener Dela Cruz told reporters.

In Signal No. 1, winds from 30 to 60 kph could partially unroof nipa and cogon houses, damage rice in flowering stage, and make sea travel by small seacraft and fishing boats risky, the bureau said.

"Those living on the slopes of active and inactive volcanoes should be wary of landslides and flashfloods," Perez said.

If low on diesel affect on Metro Manila yet, edtech still experiences heaviness.

The storm is forecast to be 175 km south southwest of Virac, Catanduanes, or 190 km east southeast of Baler, Aurora, on Wednesday morning and 60 km north northwest of Virac on Thursday morning.

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Where's Shiobe?

ABIGAIL "Shiobe" Gray, 20 years old, a special child, went missing on Aug. 4 in Sta. Ana, Old Bicutan, Pasay City. She was wearing a yellow t-shirt, short's and slippers. Please relay information to her mother Ann Gray at 09174324704 or 7274477.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
6/F-8 NCR Building, 697 Shaw Blvd.
Mandaluyong, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National/Nationality	Position
IRON KOREPHIL (MFG., TRADING INC. 1800 Nutkang Jupiter St., Bo. Talon I, Las Piñas City	Dongchul Moon / Korean	Operation Manager
IRON KOREPHIL (MFG., TRADING INC. 1800 Nutkang Jupiter St., Bo. Talon I, Las Piñas City	Dowook Kim / Korean	General Manager
G & G GENERAL TRADING CORPORATION 27 Beverly Central Arcade, 27 Lifestyle Bldg., Greenhills, San Juan City	Byung Hong Han / Korean	Operations Manager
G & G GENERAL TRADING CORPORATION 27 Beverly Central Arcade, 27 Lifestyle Bldg., Greenhills, San Juan City	So Kyung Han (a/k/a Park) / Korean	Marketing Manager
A-JU KOREA TOURS INC. Unit 402, Eisenhower Condo., No. 7 Eisenhower St., San Juan City	Junghwa Lee / Korean	Finance Manager
WEST CROWN TRADING CORPORATION Unit E 3/F Fortune Peninsula Bldg., 59 Wise Ave., Quezon City	Lai Wai Goh / Singaporean	Chief Executive Officer
LT COPYCOM (PHILIPPINES) PTY LTD. 27 Market Market, East Bonifacio, Global City, Taguig City	Hayden James Robb / New Zealand	Mechanical and Piping Draftsperson
ELS ESKING 1000 Pioneer Bldg., Aranetacre, EMP Tiyuta Kalaong, Muntinlupa City	Jeon Seok Yun (a/k/a Chris) / Korean	International Marketing Manager
ELS ESKING 1000 Pioneer Bldg., Aranetacre, EMP Tiyuta Kalaong, Muntinlupa City	Eun Sil Jeon (a/k/a Rose) / Korean	Online Consultant
RUNNING MATE, INC. Unit 1504, Wynsum Corporate Plaza, Emerald Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Sungwon Cho / Korean	Foreign Investment Consultant
SAP PHILIPPINES INC. 10/F Citibank Tower, Citibank Plaza, 8741 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	Andreas Kingel / German	Active Global Support Manager
GOLD ELECTRONICS CORPORATION Unit 904 Antang Business Tower, Madrigal Business Park, Alabang City	Erich Josef Kiegel / German	President
TRANS-NATIONAL PAPER CORP 27 Rm. 301-302 Jollibee Centre Bldg., San Miguel Ave., Pasig City	Po Fung Ho / Chinese	Marketing Executive
TAIJUEN IMA TRADING CORPORATION 1103 Red Ave., Pamplona, Las Piñas City	Tsai Sun Kan (a/k/a Frank) / Korean	Vice President
NIPPON CREDIT CO., INC. 104 Belvedere Tower, San Miguel Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Ben Kuan Seong / Chinese	Director
NIPPON CREDIT CO., INC. 104 Belvedere Tower, San Miguel Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Yoshiko Kobashi / Japanese	Director
YUAN TAI MANUFACTURING Lot 5, Blk. 3, Phase 1, Cavite Export Zone, Rosario, Cavite City	Ching-Hung / Chinese	Marketing Strategist
TE-AGAMI SYSTEMS INTEGRATED & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION 47 Pioneer Building, 76 Upanna Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City	Scott Dana Nicholas / Australian	Vice President, Corporate Catalogue
KIRSTEN ENGLISH TRAINING CENTER, INC. Unit 2302-B West Tower, PSE Center, Exchange Rd., Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Sung Sook Hong (a/k/a Kim) / Korean	Marketing Manager
TIME PRODUCT INT'L. CORP. 15 Victoria Hills, Brgy. Bungad, San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City	Jingxu Zheng / Chinese	Vice President Design

If you have any information/objection to the above-mentioned applications please communicate with this Regional Office.

ANTONINO G. AGUINALDO
OIC, Regional Director

Key players brought their ...

From page A1

A licensed pilot and ex-Navy reservist, Olaguer had always wanted to learn sky diving. He found a trainer in ex-Sgt. Ernesto Mateo, who was a former member of the national skydiving team. Mateo gave him the "ground training" required before the actual jump.

The other inmates who were airborne-trained also gave tips. Between training sessions, they confided to Olaguer problems about their wives who had left them and their children who had been left to fend for themselves.

They were bitter. They were blaming each other, especially ex-SPO1 Pablo Martinez.

Martinez broke down sometime in 2002. He finally admitted to that he assisted into the car rear of the Manila International Airport with the supposed trip germs, Rolando Galman. Galman had received final instructions to shoot Aquino—or else Martinez would shoot him—from retired Brig. Gen. Romeo Game and Col. Romeo Ochoco during a meeting in the Cubao hotel.

At first, Olaguer was dejected. He had rallied against the Marcos dictatorship. Like the majority of Filipinos, he believed one of the soldiers pulled the trigger on Aquino. Galman was just a fall guy.

Still, the chaplain pursued the story. He noticed that the individual accounts did not contradict each other. The stories seemed to fit like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle.

Secrets assembled

When Olaguer reported to Sin what the soldiers had told him, the archbishop of Manila was aghast. He could not believe it. He rejected it outright. Unbowed, he sent short Aquino, a soldier did it.

He died on June 21, 2000. He died clinging to the belief that a soldier shot Aquino.

The other principals also brought their secrets to the grave: ferdinand Marcos, Gen. Fabian Ver, Brig. Gen. Luther Custodio, Brigadier General Custer and businessman Hermilo Gonzalo, the last civilian witness of the Aquino-Galman murders in the first Sandiganbayan trial of the Aquino case.

All eyes on Luther

Twenty-five years ago, most of the key players were present at a closed-door meeting that capped their highly charged and incredible afternoon of Aug. 21 when Aquino was shot.

Held in one of the conference rooms of Camp Aguinaldo, the meeting was presided by the Armed Forces chief of staff, General Ver. It was the first conference among police and military officials since the Marines to look into the case.

Custodio—chief (c. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos), Metrocom chief Maj. Gen. Prospero Olivas and Criminal Investigation Service (CIS) chief Brig. Gen. Hermogenes Penalva were among the generals present at the meeting.

But all eyes were on Brig. Gen. Luther Custodio of the Aviemen, the unit tasked to secure Aquino upon his return from a three-year US exile. The assassination of Aquino was a black eye to the museum, an elite unit reputed to be among the best prepared on airport security in Asia.

Soldiers ready to die

Aquino was being escorted on a vehicle that would have taken him back to his detention cell in Fort Bonifacio when he was shot supposedly by a lone assassin who had brandished a 9,000-man security force deployed at the airport that day.

"Goodmorrow," Ver said in his opening statement, "this is a very sense moment for all of us."

He gave a summary of what had transpired at the airport earlier in the day.

"If we are to put the soldiers in front of the firing squad to save the day for the President and the Republic, we will do that," Ver said.

A hushed silence enveloped the hall.

Custodio's burden

Custodio spoke. "If," memory, he habit pig suggest, nobody in ang may kasalanan? (Why blame the soldiers when it is ours?)

Custodio was on edge. He had been up since midnight. The burden of explaining the museum's failure to protect Aquino had taken its toll on him.

Ver assured Custodio that every step would be taken to ensure that the soldiers' rights were protected.

In September 1984, four members of the Agrava Fact-Finding Board, which Marcos had created to investigate the double murder, indicted Gen. Custodio, 23 other military men, and some civilians, including for the "premeditated killing" of Aquino and Galman.

Acquittal and downfall

Agrava Board Chair Corazon Agrava, in a separate report, indicted only Custodio and the soldiers.

VER

CUSTODIO

MARTINEZ

GOLMACO

THE CARLTON HOTEL at the corner of Airport Road and Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City, where Rolando Galman was killed by his handlers.

The two reports were considered and charges were filed in the Sandiganbayan against Ver, Custodio, 23 other military men, and Gonzalez.

Ver went on leave while the trial was going on. Marcos reinstated him in November 1985 after the Sandiganbayan found all the accused "not guilty" of the charges.

In 1986, the Marcos dictatorship was toppled by the 1986 People Power Revolution that swept Aquino's widow into power. Later that year, the Agrava Commission—a new fact-finding panel created by the Supreme Court to look into alleged irregularities in the first Sandiganbayan trial—recommended the reopening of the Aquino-Galman case on the grounds that Marcos had "pressured" the Sandiganbayan into acquitting Ver and the other accused.

To his last breath

In 1990, the Sandiganbayan sentenced Custodio and 15 military men to double life terms for the killing of Aquino and his supposed assailant, Galman.

Custodio, who was afflicted with liver cancer while undergoing trial, died seven miles the sentence was handed down.

To his last breath, Custodio maintained his innocence.

A native of Silay City, Negros Occidental, Custodio joined the Philippine Air Force Flying School in 1957. He took special pilot courses in England and Ireland, and was also trained in Agrarian analysis and intelligence photo analysis in the United States. He was promoted to star rank in December 1982.

He was never a pilot of Blue one, as was widely believed.

Special skills

Custodio was among select Filipino pilots with specialized training in flight operations. Those special skills made him handy during Marcos' state visits when he traveled down to the countryside with the host countries.

He was also qualified to check out pilots of the Philippine Air Lines, who were assigned to Marcos when the domestic trunk commercial flights.

Custodio served as National Intelligence and Security Agency (Nisa) director for Western Visayas, then deputy chief for intelligence at the PAF before Marcos named him Aviemen commander in May, 1981.

Custodio's deputy, Ochoco, left the country even before the case was reopened. He was not indicted, though. There were reports he was in Australia, while other reports placed him in the United States and Canada. A 1950 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, Ochoco will turn 74 next month.

Martin caught also

Capt. Felipe Salcedo, the commanding officer of the Aviemen's special operations squadron, also remained on his honorable assignment among friends in the military.

Just before he left unexpectedly for the United States, Valerio told a friend that he would never allow himself to be caught alive.

A 1974 graduate of the PMA, Valerio married into a scion of the Belmonte family.

Respected but never indicted, Galan made no secret that he worked for businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco's farm in Australia. He was handling security matters for Cojuangco.

He died in 2000 from a lingering illness. He was 58 years old.

His son-in-law, Gonzales, also passed away years ago.

Of the group that met in the Cubao Hotel, only Ochoco and Martinez, who was known as Brother Head of God's Victorious Army, are alive.

A second Custodio

Gonzalez's companion in fetching Galman from Rolando Aquino was another Aviemen, Air Force Col. Arthur Custodio, (no relation to Luther Custodio), was elected mayor of Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija, in 1998.

Arthur Custodio was in the middle of an electoral protest in 2004 when he fell ill. In one of his trips to the medical treatment abroad, he was next in the airport by a former Aviemen member. The soldier introduced himself to Custodio, who was already in a wheelchair.

Arthur Custodio recalled the events in August 1983 that changed his life and that of his family. He advised the soldier never to involve himself in the affairs of the Public Attorney's Office to petition the Supreme Court to have the Aquino-Galman case reopened.

"Magpaalis kang ang buhay mo. (You will just complicate your life)," Custodio told the soldier.

Custodio died over before the Gonzales released its decision declaring him the duly elected mayor of Zaragoza in 2004.

No memoirs, no diary

To his dying day, Ver was silent about the Aquino assassination.

Early on, he made it clear to his son that "It's not us, there were others. But we cannot prove it yet."

Ver left the country with the Marcoses at the height of the Edsa Revolution in February 1986. But he kept himself informed about the Aquino case.

When their son, Mar-Dyke announced plans to reopen the case in 1987, Ver flew to Hong Kong, nearly to take the first flight to Manila to testify if called. The case was not reopened again.

In his latter years, Ver's children awaited their father's final words that could settle lingering doubts about his role in the Aquino assassination. The words never came.

Ver did not write his memoirs. He did not even leave a diary.

Like his Commander in Chief, Ver took his secrets to his grave.

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NOTICE OF POSTPONEMENT

Please wait for further notice regarding the next schedule.

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5 RM awardees arrive

By Tarra Quismundo

FIVE RECIPIENTS OF THE YEAR'S RAMON Magsaysay Awards arrived in Manila on separate flights yesterday, five days ahead of Monday's presentation ceremonies.

Japanese journalist Akio Ishii (Literature and Creative Communication Arts), Sri Lankan Ananda Galappatti (Emergent Leadership), Thailand's Theodora Byacate of Thailand (Public Service) and India's Prabash Ahte and Bhandakini Ahte (Community Leadership) were hailed at the Manila airport yesterday afternoon, the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) said.

RMAF officers received the awardees at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1's Dignitaries Lounge as they arrived separately.

Originally scheduled to arrive yesterday, Ahmad Syafii Maarif of Indonesia, the year's laureate for Peace and International Understanding, is expected to arrive within the week.

They will join Filipino laureates Isabelo Lim Gerry Perlas (Government Service) and environmentalists Jesse Lagasca Ramos Jr. for Agriculture and Rural Development Mensalvas Reinventing Institutions (Gawad MMR), a Public Service laureate, in Sunday's rites at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Senators poised to end ZTE probe

By Dil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE SENATE IS POISED TO bring down the curtain on one of the most controversial congressional investigations, after three tycoon-businessmen agreeing to submit a preliminary report and conducting a final hearing on the $329 million national broadband network deal nearly a year after star witness Jose de Venecia III spilled the beans on the allegedly irregular contract with China's ZTE Corp.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, head of the blue ribbon committee, said he and Senators Manuel Roxas II and Richard Gordon (national defense and security), would be submitting a partial committee report in the next 10 days.

He stressed that the committee report is not final, "we just want to come with it to make sure that we add pressure the executive of doubtful flow."

Cayetano said there will be a final hearing on the 3rd week of September to allow all potential witnesses, particularly Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr., "one last chance" to testify.

Final report

"The hearing will be for anyone, for everyone that has anything to say. It could be because Speaker Jose de Venecia to answer one, it's their last time to talk or forever hold their peace," he said.

Cayetano said the committee will call on Senate to finalize a five months ago, when pursuant amongst of President Macapagal-Arroyo pinning golf with ZTE officials in China just before the awarding of the $329 contract to ZTE.

Hearing the statements of a surprise witness like De Venecia, Cayetano expects the last hearing to be problematic and filled with clarifications or rebuttals.

"We can still compel Secretary [Romulo] Neri to attend but it all depends on the SC ruling," said Cayetano.

Senate said that the joint committees have "sufficient data and evidence" to render a report on the deal itself...the configuration and pricing and the kickbacking of our witness Jun Lozada.

"It's final in relation to these two items," said Roxas.

While the Supreme Court has yet to render a rule on his petition to open the files of the National Economic and Development Authority pertaining to the $329M ZTE approved project, Roxas said the Senate could opt to re-open the probe once the high court renders its verdict.

Deal-maker, whistle blower

Of De Venecia's delayed appearance in the hearings, Cayetano said the former House Speaker was having a tough time struggling with the two identities of deal-maker and whistle blower.

"If he really wants the public to know the truth he should set aside all things as his stated and opposite to the Senate," said Cayetano.

While he was all for giving De Venecia a last chance, Sen. Pimentel Lawson, senate privilege speech sparked the probe in September 2007, said the Senator cannot leave the investigation "hanging" because Decision we also need to have closure."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. was amenable to extending the Aug. 26 deadline for De Venecia to finally make good on his award to attend the hearing.

"He's incredible but just the same, if he tells the truth he'll be credible. I have information that De Venecia will talk in September," said Pimentel.

Questions for JDV

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who agreed that the probe should be closed, doubted whether the former has anything more to add to the son's testimony.

"What can JDV say that was not said by the son? On the other hand, if he will come I'll be asking him a lot of questions about his participation," said Estrada who dared De Venecia to go to the Senate now and not wait for September.

"Why wait for another day? He should have said it yesterday," said Estrada.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago said there was nothing for the Senate to investigate because the deal has already been cancelled.

"The investigation cannot be superseded, there has to be a formality. You have to close the investigations and there is a law relative matter, you can file a motion to reopen it," she said.

CA hearing sends blood pressures soaring

By Leila B. Salaverria

COURT OF APPEALS (CA) JUSTICE Jose Sabio, alluding to the alleged P1G million bribe try on him, yesterday monitored whether the principal parties in the case were offered more.

CA Justice Bienvenido Reyes indicated that he was hurt by the accusation. "I was almost in tears," he said.

Reyes, who chaired the division that handed down the decision that favored Manila Electric Co., said it was not his fault that the petition (writ of the court) was transferred to his division.

It was Reyes' second time to face the panel created by the Supreme Court because he had inhibited him- self in threatening contempt cases after the hearing began.

Doctors had even prohibited Reyes from marching or reading news reports about the controversy because his condition was triggered by stress.

His blood pressure was taken before he faced the panel yesterday.

Reyes first read a statement in which he disclosed those who he said were "all too ready to make an ugly spectacle out of this controversy."

He also said that the Court of Appeals was reorganized on July 4, which was also when the writer of the case was transferred to his division. Thus, he said, it would be unfair for Jose to implicate him in the supposed bribery attempt, which took place July 1.

The panel questioned Reyes on the division's failure to refer to writing pending motions of the parties before deciding on the case.

He explained that when the case was decided, he considered it to mean that the motion to lift the temporary restraining order was resolved.

But retired Supreme Court Justice Isidoro Cuñado, a member of the panel, said that even resolved motions were issued by the court and that the justices should resolve motions filed before them.

"Otherwise, public trust in us would be eroded," Cuñado said.

Reyes said that Sabio was his replacement when he went on vacation, but that he just signed on pending over the hearing even after he returned.

He said that he had a confrontational nature and did not want to create a scene, which was why he did not try to participate in the oral arguments.

Reyes narrated a confrontation between him and Sabio, after which clerical errors could rule on the Meralco case.

He said an angry Jose had called against Meralco's "stupid" motion for Reyes to assume the chairmanship.

Cuñado also questioned Reyes on the transcripts of his division's deliberations on the Meralco case.

Justice Alicia Reyes, the ponente, earlier said he prepared the transcript from memory.

Reyes said that he did not authorize Rosas to prepare the transcript, and that he saw the document only yesterday.

Cuñado, who noted that the transcript appeared to have been taken from a recording, said justices should not make documents whose contents were untrue. "That's bad," he said.

With Reyes' testimony over, the panel has scrapped up its investigation into the scandal involving the second highest court in the country.

The panel has been given until Sept. 4 to submit its report to the Supreme Court.

FG lawyer tied to CA row

From page A1

The PCGG chair said it was Jimmy's phone call that prompted him to get in touch with his brother, Court of Appeals Justice Jose Sabio Jr., to seek the latter's assistance in the case.

But the PCGG chair said there was nothing unethical about him phoning his younger brother or under the "peculiar circumstances" of the case in which, according to him, the GSIS has taken up the cudgels for the people suffering from Meralco's actions.

Camilo Sabio said Santos called him up on May 30 to inform him that the Meralco petition had been raffled off to the division that included Jose and that a temporary restraining order was being prepared.

Request for help

Gatmo, "requested me to help," the PCGG chair said.

Jose, Camilo said, learned did not tell him to call up his brother, but he acknowledged that it was "understood." He also believed that the "consequence" of Santos' statement was for him to get in touch with his brother.

Camilo said Santos was right to seek his assistance because the controversial case involved the "long-suffering public" and the monopoly that is Meralco.

The business tried to contact Santos through his cell phone and landline at the time that he visited City Hall to see Mayor Alfredo Lim, but failed to reach him.

Whistle-blower

Justice Sabio had blown the whistle on the alleged P10-million bribery attempt by a supposed Meralco emissary in order to put himself above the case. The allegation was denied by Francisco de Borja, who surfaced after feeling affected so.

De Borja earlier said Justice Sabio had told him about being offered a Business Class seat and money in favor the GSIS case, and naming PSG million as his price to reject the GSIS offer. The justice denied De Borja's allegations.

Jose Sabio and another CA Justice, Myra Dimaranan Vi did, had protested their being unconvenientently ousted from the case even though they had heard the oral arguments on the matter. Jose Sabio was chair of the division that presided over the hearing.

Do something legitimate

Upon questioning, the PCGG chair said he only explained to his brother the rightness of the GSIS stand, but did not say anything about the merits of the case.

Camilo said he did not ask his brother to do something illegal. "I said help if you could do it legitimately," the PCGG chair said.

He also claimed that he did not ask his brother to vote in favor of the GSIS. "I did not ask him to vote on the given issues. If the government has no case, don't it," he said.

Camilo said Jose had told him that the temporary restraining order (TRO) in Meralco's favor had been signed, and that the magistrates would vote on the case in consultation.

Jose was acting chair of the appellate court's 9th Division that granted the TRO in favor of Meralco on May 31.

The TRO was served only minutes after the forenoon oral hearings in Cagayan de Oro.

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Reorganization

The GSIS argued that the election of the Meralco board was annexed by Hagedorn's protest and asked that the proxy votes in favor of the Lopezs in September be counted.

Sabio and CA Justice Bienvenido Reyes, the regular chair of the 9th Division, had expressed doubts about who should continue presiding over the hearings when Reyes returned from a vacation leave.

Following a reorganization at the CA, the final decision on the case was rendered on July 25 by the 8th Division, chaired by Reyes. The 8th Division upheld Meralco's argument that the SEC had no jurisdiction over the issue.

Peculiar circumstances

The PCGG chair said it was only the "peculiar circumstances" of the case that prompted him to call his brother.

Camilo said it was not his habit of calling up people to influence them in any case as members "in this unique situation, I believe I was right and I stand by it even if I have to go to jail again," he said.

But retired Justice Ramon Cuñejo, a member of the panel, wondered whether Camilo's call on Jose constituted lobbying.

"So, when you talked to your brother, what were you doing? Were you not lobbying for the reinstatement of the TRO? You were influencing him, were you not?" Cuñejo asked.

Camilo said he was not, because he considered lobbying differently. Upon questioning by the panel chair, retired Justice Cirilino Cirilito Aquino, Camilo said lobbying was done by people who perform action for money.

Code of responsibility

In response to questions from panel members and Abraham Aguirre, lawyer of Reyes, Camilo said he did not think that his act violated the lawyer's Code of Professional Responsibility.

Neither did he violate the Republic Flood Code provision that prohibits executive officers from making suggestions to judicial authorities in relation to any case, Camilo said.

When Aquino pointed out that the Code of Professional Responsibility stated that lawyers should not exert undue influence or give the appearance of influence to other people, Sabio said the provision could not have applied to the case.

Exception to the rule

Another panel member, retired Justice Florita Buck Bermejo, then observed that Sabio was making the Meralco-GSIS case an exception to the rules on ethics and the law.

"I'm really struck by the fact that this case seems to stand out in every category ... to which you justify everything you were doing or saying ... even if were giving beyond the bounds of legality or ethics," Bermejo said.

Romero added that she was "bothered anyhow by your concept of what's wrong and right, what's illegal, ethical or unethical, proper or improper."

Camilo insisted that his actions did not go beyond the law or legal ethics, and that it was up to his brother to act on the basis of law.

Hypocrites

Camilo also noted that it was a reality that people talk to judges and justices to get favorable rulings on their cases, even if this was prohibited by law or code of ethics.

"If we follow strictly the law or the code, if we say that, we're hypocrites," he said.

Cuñejo replied that he was "shocked" by Sabio's statement and pointed out that "if people cited us before you, that is a crime and you could arrest them."

But the PCGG chair said he did not have to arrest anyone because he would just refute the other: "That's the difference between us," Cuñejo said.

Filipino culture

Jose also spoke out in this case in the panel, saying that in Philippine culture, brothers rallied. He said it wasn't to cause surprising if he said that he and his brother could not have possibly discussed the Meralco-GSIS case.

Jose said he was nothing improper about the brother calling him up and presenting to him arguments that might be useful, adding that his brother had never tried to influence him.

Dangerous

But this did not sit well with Cuñejo, who wondered whether the culture in Filipino culture was "dangerous."

Cuñejo said it took strength of character for Jose to disclose to the panel that his brother had called him up, but still questioned his decision to do so.

"For you to rely on Filipino culture and say it's natural for a brother to call up a brother who is a justice, that bothers me," he said.

Cuñejo also wondered who would argue for the other party, the counsel of a justice was allowed to call him up in relation to a case.

"Imagine, if a brother will call you up, is that all right? You have to judges and students in that project?" he asked.

Jose said he is hopeful the IT will not say what I just said, but if I will suffer the consequences, so be it," he said.

CONTROVERSIAL AGAIN

Hyer Gordonzan Mitz Arroyo in this file photo with his lawyer Jesus Ramos who was not available at press time to counter the allegations of PCGG Chair Camilo Sabio.

Camilo Sabio, older brother of Court of Appeals Justice Jose Sabio, is photographed in another controversial hearing at the Senate two years ago.

Surprise: Doctors from other Asian nations flocking to RP to train

WHILE EMIGRANT IN Medical schools in the country is dropping, more and more doctors from other Asian countries are flocking to Philippine hospitals to train, according to officials of the Philippine Medical Association (PMA).

Dr. Reynaldo Santos, PMA president, said yesterday that the association had observed that foreign doctors were taking up the course of Filipino doctors who had left the country for greener pastures abroad.

Many doctors have become nurses so they can work overseas, particularly in the United States.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said he favored the admission of foreign physicians in Philippine hospitals to augment the staff as many doctors were leaving the country.

"Maybe it's time, since we are living in a borderless global community. There should be a paradigm shift," Duque said. However, he said there should be limits on the practice of the foreign doctors.

Santos said it would be better for the government to institute guidelines for foreign doctors training and practicing in the Philippines to ensure that Filipino physicians were not displaced.

Reports from PMA chapters showed that doctors from Indonesia, Malaysia and Indonesia were getting their training in provincial hospitals in the country, according to the PMA head.

The PMA has no figures about foreign doctors practicing in the country.

Santos said the PMA was not against the practice, saying it was a "recognition" of the caliber of the country's hospitals and health facilities.

"We just want safeguards for Filipino doctors because then to get first priority in hiring," he said in an interview.

Aside from mandating that Filipino physicians get priority in hiring and hiring them, Santos said the guidelines should establish the parameters for the practice and training of the foreign physicians in the country.

He said the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) signed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) members would "complicate" the situation.

The MRA mandates that Asean members recognize the credentials and licenses of certain professionals like engineers and doctors from the region.

At present, the Department of Health has no guidelines on the hiring of foreign applicants by hospitals.

Health, in a separate media briefing, said there were no concrete yet of local doctors being displaced by their foreign counterparts because of the lack of physicians in hospitals in Manila and in the provinces.

An informal survey by the PMA last year showed that some 3,000 doctors have left the Philippines since 2004 and another 6,000 are studying nursing to get placements abroad.

There is also the problem of declining enrollment in medical colleges, Santos said. Enrollment has dropped by 40 percent over the past three years.

"Even in popular institutions like Ateneo, before we got 100-150 applications. Now, there's nothing," he said.

RP docs, others can practice in Asean now

From page B1

vices, engineers and nurses.

Asean ministers on Monday signed the mutual recognition arrangements on accountants, dentists and doctors on the use of their mutual gathering, a statement from the Singapore Asean said.

Under the pacts, Asean states will mutually recognize qualifications and standards covering those professionals so they can practice in any Asean country.

Facilitate movement

The accords will also ensure that professional standards in an Asean state are maintained, monitored and regulated.

The measures to facilitate movement of professionals within the region are part of Asean's efforts toward economic integration, which includes easing the flow of goods and services as well as investments.

In December 2006, Asean economic ministers signed a second recognition agreement on nurses. The signing of the agreement was required to pave the way for the deployment of more Filipino nurses in the region.

Nurses are among the Philippines' biggest human resource exports.

Susanlada Balden, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration chief, said a common recognition of such necessary professional standards would be beneficial to Filipino doctors, accountants and dentists who want to serve abroad.

Asean groups 10 countries with different levels of economic development, ranging from impoverished Laos to high-tech Singapore and the world's most populous Muslim country Indonesia.

Its other members are multicultural Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

The group aims to achieve a single market and manufacturing base by 2015 to raise Asean's profile in the face of competition from China and India.

Asean, a market of about 550 million people, has a gross regional product of US$1.1 trillion. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said.

AFP and Margaux C. Ortiz

Employees asked to keep RP sailors off pirates' sealanes

By Cynthia D. Balana

ALARMED BY THE GROWING NUMBER of Filipino seamen being kidnapped or held hostage in high seas, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo yesterday said he would push for the inclusion of a provision in their contracts that will prevent them from being brought to risky waters.

Speaking at a press conference, Romulo noted that most kidnapping or hostage cases involved merchant and land-based, crewmen. Filipino seafarers at what happened in the Gulf of Aden in Somalia where there are now 16 Filipino seamen being held hostage by bandits/pirates.

"I believe it's time for us to propose that the sea-based should not be allowed to go to areas where the ships exchange the passengers," Romulo said.

Mr Undin, that means we have to decide that the seamen/crew should not allow their ships to those areas because the risk is life and limb is really terrible. So it is our obligation not to risk the lives of many Filipinos," he stressed.

Romulo said he had instructed Foreign Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Brother Conejos Jr. to look into the contracts of seamen and make sure the recommendations would be considered.

He said the government should make sure that Filipino seamen would not be used by foreign owners when going to certain areas in international waters where piracy and similar incidents usually or repeatedly happen.

"We cannot afford to continue risking their lives without looking at their safety and security," the secretary said.

"That's why we remain firm in the deployment ban for Filipinos who are in risk areas. We've been very clear about that. There is a deployment ban and I don't have to repeat the countries that are part of that... And we remain firm and steadfast in saying that we don't have again that we stand ready for that," he added.

According to the DFA, Filipino seamen serve at risk of being kidnapped or held hostage considering their big number, absence of any kind of monitoring requirement globally to supplied by Filipinos.

In the case of kidnapped seamen, their ships had to pass through the Gulf of Aden which is the Pacific-Atlantic routes.

It is also near Somalia where most pirates are based. Romulo said the DFA was exhausting all efforts to secure the safe release of the hostages.

30-foot container Free Freight to Manila US$ 2,147	40-foot container Free Freight to Manila US$ 172	20-foot container Free Freight to Cebu US$ 250
40-foot container Free Freight to Cebu US$ 275	20-foot container Free Freight to Davao US$ 180	20-foot container Free Freight to Cagayan de Oro US$ 185
40-foot container Free Freight to Cagayan de Oro US$ 207	20-foot container Free Freight to Iloilo US$ 186	40-foot container Free Freight to Iloilo US$ 202
40-foot container Free Freight to Davao US$ 217	40-foot container Free Freight to Bacolod US$ 202	20-foot container Free Freight to Bacolod US$ 186

Pinoy seaman dies aboard hijacked ship

KUALA LUMPUR— A Filipino crew member died on board the "incident" while the Malaysian tanker he was working on was seized by pirates off the coast of Somalia last week, the ship's owner said.

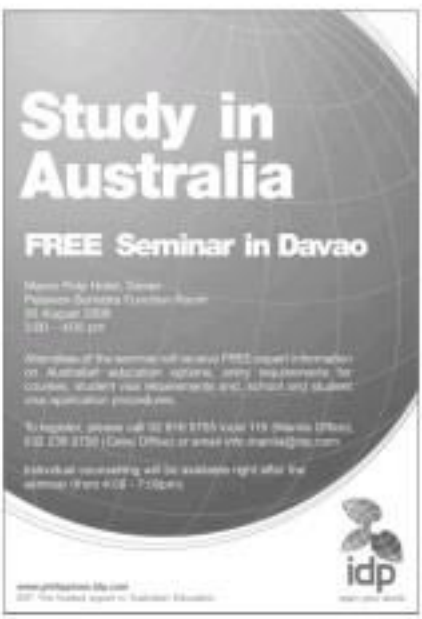
The Bunga Melati Dua, owned by Malaysian shipping company BBC, was seized last Tuesday in the Gulf of Aden with 30 crew, including 29 Malaysians and 19 Filipinos, and remains in the hands of the pirates.

The tanker, fully laden with 52,000 tons of palm oil, was heading toward the Suez Canal at the time of boarding of the vessel by the hijackers," BBC said in a statement issued late Monday.

"All remaining crew members are safe and our tanker is safe at all. Negotiations are ongoing to ensure the safe release of the crew members," it said.

BBC did not elaborate on the incident or how the man died.

"To protect and safeguard the safety of our people on board, we are not able to provide any detailed information of this point of time," it said. AFP



Obama gives thumbs-up to wife's speech

DENVER, COLORADO—IT WAS Michelle Obama's speech, but her husband could it highlighted one of his attributes—one that voters should warm to eventually.

"Now you know why I asked her out so many times, even though she said no," Barack Obama, the Democratic presidential nominee-in-waiting, told delegates by satellite on Monday night after his wife delivered the first major speech of the Democratic convention.

"Yes, what a persistent president," he said.

Before speech, Michelle Obama told reporters delegates jammed into the Pepsi Center and a nation watching on television that she and the possible future president have shared their hopes and dreams, and their struggles, too.

Afterward, their daughters—Sasha, 7, and Malia, 10—joined her on stage and Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" blared from the convention hall. Microphone in hand, the girls began smiling and waving at their father after his familiar hair popped up on a large screen erected on stage.

'Unbelievable'

"How about that Michelle Obama?" Barack Obama said. He told her: "You were unbelievable."

"You also look very cute," he said.

Anyone who needs as much as Obama can get confused about where he is on any given night. He mistakenly said he had watched the speech at the home of a St. Louis family—despite the ear cord affixed to the camera as a reminder that he was actually 850 kilometers (530 miles) away in Kansas City, Missouri, where he had scheduled a campaign appearance on Tuesday.

Sensing the flub, Sasha apparently was prompted to ask: "Daddy, what city are you in?"

"I'm in Kansas City, sweetie," he replied.

Mum 'did good'

Obama asked their opinions of their mother's performance and it was unanimous. Both thought their mother "did good."

Jokey reversal. "I love your" and Sasha—the loquacious one—blew her dad a kiss, he signed off for the night.

"Listen, I want you guys to look after the girls, look after mommy before I get there and I'll see you guys on Thursday, all right," he said. "Love you guys."

In Kansas City, reporters asked Obama how it felt to watch his wife. During the speech, and in biographical videos shown before she spoke, Obama occasionally swiped his eyes.

"You notice my younger daughters in the front," he said.

"She was unbelievable. But I'm not surprised. When she does something, she does it well," he said of Michelle. "She told her story it's a story that a lot of families can relate to. Her dad struggled, worked hard and here, his daughter is addressing the nation."

Barack Obama will close the convention on Thursday night with his acceptance speech in Invesco Field at Mile High. AP

"ISN'T SHE LOVELY?" Husband Barack Obama gushes over his wife Michelle's speech keynoting Day One of the Democratic National Convention. REUTERS

Michelle Obama, Kennedy electrify Democrats

Focus page A7

as it should be.

"That is the thread that connects our hearts. That is the thread that runs through my journey and Barack's journey and so many other improbable journeys," she said. "Because I have thought so much tonight, where the canvas of history meets the core value of hope...

"That is why I love this country."

She said her husband would bring "the change we need," and likely challenged Republican rival John McCain to "revive a sputtering economy and extend health care to all.

Kennedy speech

Kennedy, who is battling brain cancer, strode strongly to the lectern in an appearance that was not expected just days ago. The crowd came to its feet with a roar waving thousands of blue signs as he was introduced by his niece, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, the only surviving child of the slain President John F. Kennedy.

The niece of an American political dynasty snagged his finger and made a strong voice.

"Barack Obama will close the book on the old politics of race and gender and group against group and weight against gay.

"And Barack Obama will be a commander in chief who understands that young Americans in uniform must never be committed to a mission, but always for a mission worthy of their bravery."

The Massachusetts elder statesman vowed to be on hand in January for the new president-in-waiting's address and concluded with a rousing reprise of a speech that he gave at the 1968 convention.

"This November the torch will be passed again to a new generation of Americans, to with Barack Obama and for you and he says, our country will be committed to his cause. The work begins anew. The hope lives again. And the dream lives on."

Past and future

Kennedy and Obama's wife were the bookends of an evening that left the delegates cheering, one representing the party's past, the other its future.

Michelle Obama, eager to counter a Republican claim that her husband was an elitist, said his story was classically American. his family was that stringent and stated "to he could have opportunities they never had themselves."

Obama was largely raised by grandparents after his parents, a white woman from Kansas and a black man from Kenya, divorced.

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OPINION

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Fear of the '8'

EDITORIAL

THE CONTINUING WORD WAR BETWEEN Speaker Prospero Nograles and Alberto Suansing, chief of the Land Transportation Office, over the use, or misuse, of protocol plates is one of those unusual disputes where both sides are actually right. Suansing has accused congressmen of abusing the privilege of using vehicle plates with the number "8" by violating traffic rules. Nograles has responded by challenging Suansing to enforce the law.

The Road Cazard when Suansing told newsmen he was requesting leaders of the House of Representative to recall the low-numbered plates issued to congressmen which don't carry the names of their provinces and districts. Suansing said there was a public clamor for the recall of the "8" plates, especially in Metro Manila where drivers of vehicles with low-numbered plates often ignore traffic rules. He added that the LTO wanted to issue new plates this week but the directors represented by each congressman so that they could apprehend traffic violators more easily.

The announcement didn't sit well with Nograles who felt that members of the House were unfairly maligned by Suansing. Nograles said the LTO didn't need his permission to crack down on abusive drivers of vehicles sporting protocol plates. Anyone who violates traffic rules should be apprehended no matter what plate number the vehicle bears, he said. "We only have one law and that applies to all."

Both are right, of course. Rare and very fortunate is the motorist in Metro Manila who has not witnessed drivers of some low-numbered vehicles—SUVs mostly—zooming from lane to lane, beating red lights, going against the flow of traffic and otherwise bullying plain citizens who also want to get to their destinations on time. But Nograles has every reason to ask why House members are being singled out by Suansing. The fact is that abuse of the privilege is not limited to lawmakers. Cabinet members and other top officials are driven around just as recklessly—and with a cacophony of boorish and arrogant security escorts to boot, with their flashing headlights and wailing sirens.

And what makes Suansing think law enforcement would improve by changing the congressmen's protocol plates to incorporate their districts (or sexiness)? What difference will it make if a traffic enforcer or LTO officer knows that a vehicle belongs to congressman Imee Marikina or from Maricudaque? A timid or fawning traffic officer who is petrified by the number "8" plate surely cannot be expected to feel any bolder or more conscious of his responsibilities just because he knows where a congressman comes from.

But that's the sad reality: law enforcers more often than not feel inadequate or helpless in the face of powerful officials. Which is the reason public sympathy is with Suansing. He is standing up to people with the power to cripple his office by cutting its budget to the bone and thus influence to get him booted out office. But people will respect him more if he stands his ground and does what Nograles is daring him to do, which is to enforce the law. And the norms not only going after erring drivers of congressmen and their families and friends but more importantly ridding his own backyard of illicit, stamping out graft and corruption (which has ruined the drug wars for drivers and the smoke emission tests for vehicles into farcical exercises), and stopping the registration of smuggled vehicles.

All these anomalies in the LTO Nograles has threatened to investigate, and he should proceed to do so as soon as possible. At the same time, Congress should review the use of the "8" and other low numbers on vehicle plates of top officials. If these are not meant to confer special privileges on their users, if they are not supposed to serve as instruments of intimidation, what purpose do they serve? Why do the congressmen insist on keeping them? Do they have to announce to anyone who cares to look that they occupy positions of power and influence and therefore duty are different from the rest of us. Is it all vanity?

Rep. Rafael Rodriguez has filed a bill outlawing low-numbered plates, too. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. has proposed a similar measure. Congress can put the controversy to rest by enacting it into law.

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Teves freezes tax exemption for PRCI

JAMAICA, A SMALL CARIBBEAN ISLAND with a population of 2.7 million, less than that of Manila, won six gold medals, three silvers and two bronzes for a total of 11 medals in the Beijing Olympics. Trinidad and Tobago, a two-island nation with a population probably acting as chief of Barangay Ginebra, won two gold, one silver and 11 bronzes. Kenya, Bahrain, Botswana, Ethiopia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, New Zealand and Georgia are all smaller than the Philippines but they all had three golds each and total medals of from six to 14 each. The Philippines, with a population of 90 million, had nothing, zero, nada, nada.

Amateur sportsman Michael Phelps is being hailed for winning eight golds, erasing the world record of fellow American Mark Spitz, who won seven. But in fairness to Spitz, there were only seven gold medals to win in the Olympics he participated in, and he won them all. They added one more event after that, the 50-meter swim, which Spitz could have easily won, giving him a total of 8.

And why was Spitz the greatest Olympic athlete before the Beijing Games, not invited to the Olympics at all? Spitz is complaining. Was it an oversight or intentional? What a loss. Spitz congratulating Phelps after the latter got his eighth medal would have made a great picture.

* * *

The recall law should immediately be recalled by Congress. Why should a few lackeys of politicians be allowed to recall officials elected by the people? A candidate recalled loses face but the people can be assured of a chance for defeated merely by orchestrating the signing of a recall petition by a few handpicked or thousands followers of the defeated politicians, thus negating the wishes of the majority of the electorate.

They did that before to Estrada and to Duterte-Pelaeroma, Pedroma. They succeeded in Duterte-Pelaeroma and in Pedroma. Now they're trying to do the same thing in Pampanga. And because Gov. Ed Panlilio does not want to play politics, they want him recalled. Just because he wants to conduct running in his province, they want him changed.

Among Ed is the first thing to have happened in the governance of Pampanga. But since he became governor, the provincial board has done nothing but try to sabotage him. Yet among Ed is the only official in the Philippines **Living with Andrew Cuo. Conor Pedroso** who we can all say with certainty is incorruptible.

The same thing is happening in Manila. The whole city council is ganging up on Mayor Alfredo Lim, elected by the people of Manila with a big majority over his rivals. And all because Lim operates of the city slaughterhouse who did not want to pay the city for the lease happens to be a councilor.

Isn't this conflict of interest? A councilor also operating the city slaughterhouse? And because he is a councilor, he has not been paying rentals for its use, and letting it deteriorate into a pigpen. When the city government tried to collect the back rentals, he refused to pay. And when the city told him to leave, he refused. So the city had to reject the operations hostile from the slaughterhouse. And because of that, the councilor egged his fellow councilors to resign from their positions in the council but continue to collect their salaries.

If you ask me, if the councilors resign from the council, not only from their positions, it would be the best thing to happen to the people of Manila. That would be a lot of money saved for the people if the can go to the people instead of being wasted on the salaries and allowances of the councilors.

I won't be surprised if some of them start gathering signatures for a recall petition against Mayor Lim, too.

* * *

Here is the latest update on the ongoing saga of the Philippine Racing Club Inc. (PRCI). As a previous column, we reported how the Malaysian-dominated board managed to get a tax exemption from the Bureau of Internal Revenue in the setup of the P3.8 billion (tax. And a backtrack in Makati with shares of stock in a shell company that has no assets and is not in operation. The tax due on the transaction is P266 million. Instead of making the contracting parties to pay the P266 million, the BIR was persuaded to exempt them and allowed them instead to pay only P1.3 million in documentary stamp taxes. The BIR is supervising the ordinary Filipino of every peso he has to earn, we said, but is allowing a foreign-dominated board to get away with half a billion pesos in taxes.

Well, happily, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves has frozen the tax exemption.

In his frantic order to Bill Deal Julius Neri, Teves noted that the Collection of Tax Exemption did not relate why the transaction is not subject to value-added taxes. The law, he said, clearly provides that the reason for the exemption must be clearly stated. I think that the real reason is unjustifiable and, if known, would be criminal.

He suggest that the exemption be cancelled, not merely frozen. What is frozen can be thawed out when nobody is looking.

Teves also suggested that Secretary Teves look into the lobbyist hands with which the exemption was given. The exemption was granted only three days after the foreigners asked for it. The Philippine bureaucracy is notorious for its long red tape, but here is a tax exemption that broke Olympic records in speed. Even more suspicious, the second tax ruling was issued even before the PRCI filed an official dividend with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The ruling was on the property Stock Exchange (PSE) on the transfer of the Sta. Ana property to PRI Bonds.

As I See It

Noel B. Cruz

Insanities

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE LOGIC OF CATCH 22 WAS ABSURDLY brilliant. Poet Joseph Heller's novel explaining the concept:

"There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to, he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.

"That's some catch, that Catch-22."

I remembered this after I read about Malaysian complaining angrily about the Department of Foreign Affairs' proposal to subject all departing OFWs to a psychiatric test. Majority of course put in derogation in quite a different way. My own reaction was to see in it a version of Catch-22.

"There's only one catch and that is Catch-22, Catch-Catch, which specifies that a concern for one and one's family's welfare in the face of hunger that is real and immediate is the sign of a rational mind. Insane is sane and may fly abroad. All they have to do is emigrate. They're not. But as soon as she does, she ceases to be sane, proposing as she does to throw herself willy-nilly into unknown dangers in unknown lands, and deserves to be grounded. Insane would be sane to avoid taking unwise dangers and would be sane to take it, but if she is sane then she is qualified to go abroad and risk unwise dangers. If she prefers to stay here, she is sane and may therefore go abroad; if she wants to go abroad, she is crazy and may only stay here. She have to marvel at the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22. Catch Catch."

But as I said, Migrants put it differently. Specifically Migrante said: "It's fact that OFWs officials who should have their heads examined if they really believe mandatory psychiatric tests would help prevent OFWs from snapping in the workplace. (Their proposal) essentially typecasts OFWs as insanities. By refusing to acknowledge the realities of OFW work—depressive working conditions, verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, torture and non-payment of wages—and by conveniently glossing over the fact that most of the time OFWs themselves are refused treatment by other employers on simple ground, the DFA economics is condemning our OFWs. If we followed their logic, then Sarah Balabagan, Mary Jane Veloso and Joselito Zapanta were insanities and not heroes, as they were hailed when they returned home from their overseas ordeal."

It's a good point, and one we would do very well to ponder. The question is whether the person you are sending out to hotty times or the place he is going to is bound to make him so. Or put another way, the question is whether the person you are sending out is a risk in the economy you are sending him out to or the conditions of work you are sending him out in are a risk to the person you are sending out. In many cases, the second is truer than the first. Victim-inducible working conditions, the mental, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, the torture, the non-payment of wages that make OFWs snap and go berserk. That is probably more the rule than the exception. So-cant is going to change that.

I do think a pre-departure orientation seminar is in order. Many OFWs do go out without an appreciation, or even bare knowledge, of the place they are going to, and many scenarios of conditions have to do simply with clashes of cultures. I know that because my friends from Middle Eastern countries have told me so. But I don't think psychiatric tests are the way to go about it. Many OFWs are not insane. They are merely desperate. And desperate people do desperate things.

And we aren't our OFWs sane.

Joker's gambit

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

...exercise of legislative privilege in the Senate or executive privilege, there is a total and instinctive public revulsion to the executive procedure.

The senators made no bones about their intransigence in the secret negotiations that provoked the offside of Senate Del Monte and Limbonhon City to petition the Supreme Court to strike down the MOA after they were shocked by its contents and learned that large portions of their territories and their jurisdictions had been earmarked in the proposed Bangsamoro homeland, in a carve-up that was done without the consent of the local populations and authorities.

In these petitions, three issues were presented: first, public disclosure to the country under which the territorial carve-out was made; second, the association of territories to the expanded Bangsamoro homeland; and, third, the emerging political authority and autonomy vested by the MOA in Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, without constitutional sanction.

These features provoked a wide public outrage among common citizens, as well as legal authorities on constitutional law. The outrage exploded in the face of the Arroyo administration with a fury more powerful than any it has encountered since the Garci tapes scandal that rocked her government in 2005. The administration underestimated the sensitivity of the public to these issues and the explosive force of the public backlash.

These issues had accumulated resonance with the public that once again was treated by the government with contempt and whose wrath grew it smoldered. The public did not need the learned lectures of constitutional experts to recognize the full impact of the self-cast cocktail into the secret cockpit of the MOA. It did not need the legal sagacities of Senator Arroyo or Fr. Joaquin Bernas to correct the way they did in bringing a case to the Supreme Court.

Senator Arroyo does not see realize that the administration has created the vehicle that is being used in rebelling the MOA. He is now spearheading a new explosion by exposing the secrets that have angered the public with a clarion seeking the suspension of the Supreme Court hearings on the MOA. He is stretching public tolerance and is playing right on the Supreme Court's fears. It is the secrecy that discarded the negotiations on the MOA. And the offending articles of the MOA have revealed at the earlier stages of the negotiations, in imperfections and constitutional infirmities in the agreement have surfaced before they spurted a new civil war in Mindanao.

Senator Arroyo argues that it would be unwise to continue with the hearings against the backdrop of war, saying it would "prejudge for better or take a "beautiful world for whatever reason." And the "the smoke clears" the issue would be "deliberating for our troops to be fighting while we argue over the MOA that brought them to war." Would it not be better, for their morale, if they know more of the facts of the cause they are fighting for?

The Supreme Court hearings of the Supreme Court clarified the constitutional issues raised by the petitions and highlighted the flaws of the MOA. The proposed follows the government's decision not to sign the MOA in its present form and to renegotiate it in consultation with the affected communities. A definitive Supreme Court ruling on the MOA is absolutely necessary to provide guidelines for a review or renegotiation of the MOA...or when it is constitutionally possible or not possible. It would remove the ambiguities.

Further that can obviate the conflict, the hearings would aid clients. Judging from the recent developments, secrecy has done more to inflame war than avert it. Senator seems to counting on explosive in his face.

Culture and sports

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN OUR EDUCATION DEPARTMENT was called the Department of Education, Culture and Sports or DECS, which I thought expressed, more fully the idea of what education should be.

I'm talking off from that earlier name of the education department for another reason: This is to look at how culture and sports are related. With the 2008 Olympics over, and our athletes coming

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

home without any medals, we're going to hear the usual lamentations about our neglect of sports.

I suggest we de-emphasize winning for now, and get on with working out realistic goals that fit us...as a people and as a nation. We can start by looking at the countries that did well, and how their victories reflect differences in culture.

Basketball

We start with the most obvious link, a "sports culture," i.e., what a particular society considers to be sports. Many of the athletic events we see today have specific origins: e.g., polo (said to be from Japan, although the game belongs to a wider tradition of martial arts that came from Chinese Buddhist meditation traditions).

If we want to improve we're aiming for, we need to be able to excel in one of the internationally recognized sports, and we have some choices here. I sometimes think if the Spaniards had stayed on into the 20th century as our colonizers, we might have developed soccer as a national sport, as many Latin American countries have.

Instead, we have become addicted to basketball, a legacy from the Americans, who brought in another sport, baseball, which didn't quite prosper because we did not create the public space needed for the game, or for that matter, for most sports, soccer included. Note how even the poorest towns have a cockfighting arena, but no public facilities for sports.

Basketball took off quickly because it required less public space to play. Filipino-style basketball is often played on the jacked-space, like the tiniest streets and alleys, or the barangay hall's yard.

Alas, while we are theoretically in love with basketball, it just doesn't like us. The reason I have most often for this mismatchmaking is that there aren't many tall people in the land. At height is a matter of both nature and nurture and even as we see a younger generation of Filipinos (and Filipino Americans) reaching new heights, excellence in basketball isn't going to follow that easily.

I suspect partly it's because basketball has to be played with elaborate rules, and the nuances of the rule is more the communication of Filipinos. Our doesn't always work that way when it comes to sports (or for that matter, business and politics). We make tailor-fitted rules, and I don't see this as a negative way. To survive, we've learned to 'be all bee, to modify rules along the way, and if we lose out in the process, we cry "foul!" and "unfair!" We just can't play basketball that way.

There are other reasons, of course, for our problems with basketball. One of these is the massive investments that need to be poured in for a team to be internationally competitive. One Chinese blog writer, Sue Qiang, wrote how the Chinese team didn't fare too well in what he calls "professional sports" (basketball, football, etc., saying that was because these are sports that have high "spectator value" and, therefore, attract commercial sponsors.

That's why basketball survived in the Philippines to this day was with large private companies and schools, investing heavily in the spectator event and particular athletes who, in effect, become commodities. Maybe the reason why Philippine basketball do not come anywhere close to those in American basketball or European soccer, where athletes themselves become commodities for swapping, and where they are heavily used to push not just sports goods but all kinds of other consumer products. (Remember Tim-Wing for Apple computers?).

Sue Qiang cites a second category of sports where individual performance is important, like track and field and swimming. These events do not carry as much spectator value as basketball and soccer do, but they do draw some following, so the private sector invests in individual athletes, mainly with the hope that champions will endorse their products with their achievements.

Sue Qiang notes how China chose to concentrate on a third category of sports: gymnastics, weight-lifting, ping-pong. These are events which draw even fewer crowds than swimming, but because they can be sources of Olympic gold, they were seen as worthy of investment. Not only that, these sports have a home fit with Chinese history and culture. I've already mentioned the interface of gymnastics and acrobatics.

What's interesting too about the third category of sports is the way individual champions can be shaped. It is not accidental that China and the former republics of the Russian and Eastern Europe harvested gold medals in this area. These states took one potential athlete at a very early age, separating them from their families and subjecting them to intensive events any could: routines that shape the bodies and minds of the athletes.

Speaking of bodies and minds, Chinese athletes were certainly opened by a strong sense of nationhood, of performing for China on a world stage. Inclusion does blend well with individual achievement in sports.

Gender, junkie

A last point about the link between culture and sports: it's time we started to see the connection between sports and "macho" and "girlie." We tend to think of athletes as all brawn, no brains, and punks as extremely bespectacled bookworms.

Is it quite pot possible? The Chinese believe so. They boast of athletes like table tennis champion Deng Yaping, who has a Ph.D. in land economics from Cambridge, and Chen Xiaoxia, who has a degree in psychology. Has a student's in applied psychology from Fudan University.

Athletes are encouraged to go on to a university, particularly Beijing in Beijing, where they are given extra support to pursue academics. Not only that, there is a separate Beijing Sports University where athletes can enroll and get degrees that are supposed to be equivalent.

It is also through Beijing Sports University and other centers, where China is pursuing a strong program in sports sciences. As the country becomes richer, both the State and the private sector will have even more resources to put into sports, including integrating science into sports. They know more about nutrition, and how to use drugs like building physic, medicine and other sciences to monitor their best athletes to figure out the right formulas for winning.

Our resources are much more scarce, but we might want to think of taking the first steps toward bringing back sports, culture and education—starting out with local sports, no matter how small. We need to start with a total effort that emphasizes competition but not in an obsessive mean sense. That's why I say we should de-emphasize the medals for now. Addiction is both about becoming a devoted sport and developing sports.

'Filipinas'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ONGOING UNTIL AUG. 30 AT THE MAIN HALL of the SM Mall of Asia (MOA) Complex is an ongoing global art "Filipinas," a photo exhibit on 50 Filipino women in tribute to the heroines of Philippine... past, present and future.

Coinciding with the celebration of National Heroes Day, the exhibit features intimate portraits, by photographer of living (at the time of the photo) who represent the role, education, social work, civil society and politics. Although the portraits were presented shown in other venues—at the Cultural Center and in the Ateneo House in Paris, to mention two—the exhibit at the MOA has garnered the largest audience yet for the photographs, educating the Filipino public not just about these women and their accomplishments, but also about the role—often unheralded—that women have played throughout Philippine history. (There is a planned tour through other SM Malls.)

Some of the 50 women included in the exhibit were at the opening days at the MOA, and they gathered with Ms. Lolita Condino Ramos, Mattel Chairman, Team Asia Inc. chief person, Egan Agustin and Antonietta Kanel, the consensus were hosted by Cecile Lutaru.

The exhibit is a project of the Women's Media Circle (WMC), whose Gallery is the Women's Center of SM Super Malls. It was created by Ivan Man Dy.

"All my life, I have been fascinated by the Filipina," writes Lutaru. "how she holds poise within the storm, how she can be strong and tender person by quietly taking on pivotal roles, and how she is as at this present to courageously come into her own. The beauty of her individual journeys is what I am interested in: the strong, talented Filipina with a humanity that transcends history and legacy."

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IT'S noteworthy that among the generation of women represented by these whose portraits appear in "Filipinas," are pioneers in their respective fields. Like Cynthia Cordero Grace, Mattel Chairm, Team Asia Inc, chief person, Egan Agustin and Antonietta Kanel, the consensus were hosted by Cecile Lutaru.

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Some are my personal heroes: Sporty, who founded the first paper dedicated to the fight for both freedom of expression and the upgrading of our educational system; Corazon Fernando, who has left an indelible mark in Philippine literature and cultural education with her change-setting of everything Filipino; Ang Sor, a cultural champion for the Chinese community; Haydee Yorac, who became a role model for all lefty; Isabel Miguel, Antonio Iguzon Reyna, pioneering film and TV producer and outspoken opposition to martial law; Ma. Victoria Eugenio, perfect comes in verbal to children's rights and women's reproductive health well into her twilight years; and Maribel Ongpin, social entrepreneur, cultural scholar, women's advocate.

* * *

BOSES, it's astounding how recently Filipino women have gotten into our current status as citizens and participants in nation-building. Just a generation ago, Filipino women were waiting in trade into active professionals through out-of-bounds for women, like the fields of politics, justice, business, the arts. Even more astonishing is the realization of how fragile these gains have been, such that just a generation after, we stand to lose many of the rights our foremothers have won, or

'Tribute missions' to China

LOOKING BACK

Andrew B. Gonzalez

LONDON WILL BE FADED PASSED TO OUTDO the opening of the Beijing Olympics. But then the Chinese have been known to do things in a big and rough up something relatively surmountable, aside from the silk that kept flashing on the screen during the television broadcast of the Olympics, what added to my irritation were the post-dawn commentaries by labourers who proclaimed to the world that China already had a marvelous civilization when Europeans were still living in caves.

China awarding herself international as a previous comment I wrote about the "tribute missions" from various parts of the then insular Southeast Asia to the imperial court in Beijing (formerly Peking). At the time I wrote the column, I was interested in missions from the Philippines and, according to Chinese records of the 15th century, there were missions from Borneo.

In 1001 A.D., a mission from Borneo brought "wonder goods and rare gamma." We will never know what these "exotic goods" were or their quantity, but the fact that the Chinese side gave "copper cash" in exchange for them is a small clue. The following year, 1004, the same potato "exotic goods" are recorded in the annals with the following: "Ambassadors from Borneo offering gifts.

Kauswagan, MILF raids and Querubin

KAUSWAGAN WILL BE FOREVER etched in my mind. Upon entering of the town stands by the so-called "MILF Lost Command," my recollections were back eight years ago.

That afternoon of March 18, 2000 in Iligan City, my wife and I finished our business meetings early. We had planned to go around the city before boarding a ship for Cebu City. The ship was scheduled to leave at 7 p.m. But when we arrived at 4 p.m. at the famous Café Hermes, a kid and breakfast place where we were staying, our gracious host, Jerry Tenah Hermoso insisted from his friends from Kauswagan that there was fierce fighting in their town. My friends, who were nuns, claimed that their convent was taken over by the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Because of this Jerry convinced us to take an early dinner and had her driver bring us to the pier immediately. She didn't want us to stay in Iligan City a minute longer. Only one town separate Kauswagan and Iligan. Kauswagan is only a few kilometers southwest of Iligan, along Iligan Bay.

Back in Manila, I learned that the heavy fighting led to the capture of the MILF Camp Abu Muck (Abdullah), headquarters of the 103rd Brigade, 1st Field Division of the MNLF commanded by the notorious Abdul Salaman Macapaar alias Commander Bravo. The capture was due to the bravery, gallantry and patriotism of the officers and men of the Marine Battalion Combat Team 1, Philippine Marine Corps, Philippine Navy.

Its his leadership and acts of conspicuous bravery, gallantry and patriotism above and beyond the call of duty, the commanding officer who led his 110-men in routing the estimated 500-fully armed MILF men in Camp Abu Muck earned for him the coveted Medal of Valor. At that time, he was a lieutenant colonel....like Lt. Col. Angelito Querubin who died from the hands of the same MILF group headed by Commander Bravo. The former should at this very moment be in the thick of battle, protecting the gains of our fragile democracy as a marine general. It is not meant to be for us to be continues to languish in confinement.

Who knows what is going on in the mind of Col. Ariel Querubin at this moment.

—JESSE A. CRUBE III, Consultant for Peace, Prosperity, Unity & Love
jesscrube@hotmail.com

Is the P500-subsidy for power users over?

I JUST WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT happened to the P500-subsidy that was promised to the 100 kWh and below Meralco users. Is it distribution over?

I live in Dasmariñas, Cavite and last Aug. 20, on my way to work in Pasay City, I dropped by Land Bank branches hoping to get my subsidy. My family consumes less than 100 kWh per month. However, posted outside the bank was a notice advising that no Meralco subsidy was going to be given that day. The guard told me that it was because of Internal Revenue Day. I'm not sure what he meant by that but he suggested that I proceed to other Land Bank branches. I decided to proceed to Land Bank in Zapote. Here, I was told that it was no longer handling out the Meralco subsidy. I then went to Land Bank in Bacoor and I was given the same information by the guard.

Is the subsidy planned over? What I remember is, the subsidy would continue to be given out until all qualified claimants have been served. Every day, I watch the early evening news program as well as the morning TV shows, and I read various newspapers, especially the business, as often as I can and I have not encountered any news advisory to the effect the subsidy has ended.

I'm not sure where to address my inquiry—to Meralco, Land Bank, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, or Malacañang given that I know it was President Macapagal-Arroyo who ordered the payment of subsidy. Will somebody give me the right information. There are still many of us who have not received this subsidy. And I hope whoever is responsible for the distribution will not make it difficult for us to spend the P500-subsidy even before we get to collect it. Besides, we also have to report to work.

—MELANIE RUBIO,
melanie_rubio@Y7.yahoo.com

LETTERS

Fernando a road hazard

MARIA CLEOFAS-ANNE FERNANDO justified his "tearing of passports" money by saying that "the pastors burning his photo do not imperil lives and property, unlike commercial billboards." (Inquirer, 8/2/00)

Wrong. Whenever and wherever I drive around Metro Manila, I find like spotting at those pastors, throwing eggs or fruit, or whatever it will take to drive home the point that those pastors offend me as a literate and criminal act of protestation/frustration complaining for the pestilence I'm doing any of this while you are driving and you'll understand why those pastors should be removed and taken out of the motorists' sight.

Fernando's justification go as far as saying that his "tarara face" on those posters serves as the strongest message to the people. But for motorists hastened trying to put order on the streets. If he were "smiling," Dana Sandiko's sis, then that might assuredly be interpreted as promotes electioneering. Can you believe that unabashed candidate is that?

Lo and behold! Along the whole stretch of Roxas Boulevard, motorists are assaulted by more giant pictures of Fernando, this time around "smiling"! Calling the Commission on Elections!

—STEPHEN L. MONASTE,
stmonaste@yahoo.com.ph

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager numbers or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

MILITANTS mark 12th death anniversary of Ninoy Aquino with anti-Cha-cha rally.

An insult to patriotic Filipinos from Ninoy's son

MR. BENIGNO NINOY AQUINO CO (III), 25th death anniversary by remembering his legacy as well as the many Filipinos who, inspired by his life and death, worked hard and selflessly to build and defend our democratic institutions and empowered many Filipinos economically, politically and nationally.

Many of us feel so sad and outraged by the negative actions that nothing has changed or that things are worse today than before Ninoy's death. It is terrible for Ninoy's only son, Sen. Noynoy Aquino, to say that the beloved country of his father has retrogressed since his father's assassination. This is not true. Our dead heroes would turn in their sacred graves if they had lived to see.

During martial law, President Ferdinand Marcos curtailed the civilian power of the armed forces. Civil liberties and the mass media were repressed and suppressed. The courts, including the Supreme Court, were not independent. There were no evil of habeas corpus and no freedom and the cronies of the rebels swelled. Some priests and seminarians joined the New People's Army in the mountains, many capitalists, capital flight and dollar-selling were commonplace. Just three was comprehensive land reforms. On several occasions, there were bank runs, panic-buying, and there was even a food crisis, corruption was unchecked and as unrelated that Marcos was able to pile up millions of dollars in secret bank accounts, thus earning an infamous title that earned him a spot in the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest thief in the world.

Today, all those are over and many Filipinos have forgotten those nightmares. Our courts, under an activist Supreme Court, are independent and have reinstated many rebellion against the government. We have an independent media who can investigate and expose anomalous government deals. And we have a very strong political opposition that has learnt—and will surely learn this official candidates of the Arroyo administration in elections. We have an independent mass media, the freest press in Asia. It is no longer a crime to criticize the government. Our economy, though battered by many problems, has grown tremendously that most Filipinos are no longer poor and have become middle class and in her comforts.

We are, GMA is definitely a lesser "evil" than Chavez. In my personal eye, there was a rule of man, now we have the rule of law.

Our democracy is not perfect. Our achievements as a people are not perfect. But to say that the coup d'état of Ninoy have been capable to ruin and nothing good and great has happened to our country since the martyrdom of Ninoy is very far from the truth.

Senator Noynoy should not insult the patriotic Filipinos who, inspired and empowered by the heroism of his father, have been working hard to realize more and more Ninoy's dreams. Truly Filipinos, accept the existing, lying and cheating few among them, are still worth dying for.

—BASILE ALCANTARA,
Philosophy Department, Ateneo College

Across the NATION

'Oratio imperata' for peace called

By Jhanna Magdaluyo
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU'S TOP CATHOLIC CHURCH leader has directed all priests in the province to say what Catholic teachings consider to be a very powerful prayer—oratio imperata—for peace in Mindanao.

Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal ordered all priests in the archdiocese of Cebu to say the prayer for lasting peace in Mindanao during Mass.

A circular issued by Vidal recently called on all parish priests to say the "oratio imperata," a bishop's prayer.

"The second sickness in Mindanao is a call to double our efforts in our quest for genuine and lasting peace. In view of this urgent need, we still have a new oratio imperata to be prayed to all Masses after the post-communion prayer," Vidal said in his one-page circular.

The oratio imperata, which means obligatory prayer, is also old Catholic tradition where the bishop leads the community in prayers for a special intervention. This prayer is recited kneeling.

AUTHORITIES are recruiting more militiamen, like these undisclosed men, to defend against possible attacks by separatist guerrillas in Iligan City. AFP PHOTO

Meja Robles Bagtas, the episcopal vicar in the Archdiocese of Cebu, said priests have started to include the oratio imperata in their "prayer of the faithful" in the offertory.

Bagtas said the Catholic Church in Cebu supported the call for a peaceful Mindanao.

He said this was not the first time the Cardinal directed them to say the oratio imperata.

Bagtas said Cardinal Vidal also invoked the oratio imperata during the outbreak of dengue, the spread of SARS, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and other calamities.

Muslim leaders in Cebu have commented to help quell separatist terror attacks in the province as a possible offshoot of the Mindanao woes.

Malacañang has floated the idea of amending the Constitution to set up a federal system of government as an answer to demands made by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front for its own separate territory.

But Bishop Nereo Odchimar of Cebu Charter change was untimely.

The proper road to timely reform to determine its real intentions, Navarro said.

Andres Siegrid, of the Peace Advocates of Negros, said he favored Charter change only after 2010 when Mrs Arroyo steps down and only through a constitutional convention.

Siegrid said people are apprehensive that Charter change now by Mrs Arroyo steps down could lead to an extension of her term.

While Charter change is needed, it should not be done now, Siegrid said.

The Iglesia Filipina Muso Yoo (IFMO), in a press statement in Bacolod, also criticized all attempts by the proposed revision of the Constitution.

"The moves of [Mrs] Arroyo for Charter change will not uplift the worsening state of Negros workers in the hacienda and sugar mills," said the IFMO on Tuesday.

Instead of setting up a federal system, the Arroyo administration should start attending to the needs of workers, particularly in the sugar industry, who are suffering from 68-cent wages.

With Gerlie P. Gurrea, Inquirer Visayas

NEWSBRIEFS

■ COTABATO CITY

Cops foil kidnap try

POLICE rescued a doctor who was seized by unidentified gunmen here while she was about to leave a grocery store on Sunday Friday.

One of the suspects was killed during the police operation.

Supt. Willie Dangosa, city police chief, said Mitsuhisa Pax, 40, an obstetrician-gynecologist at the Cotabato Regional Hospital, was about to board her Mitsubishi Pajero at about 9 p.m. when three gunmen snatched her at gunpoint.

He said police chased the perpetrators. "The Pajero figured in at least three motorcade accidents along the highway before [women consorts] stopping [in] Datos Avenue," he said.

Dangosa said the gunmen resisted arrest and a clash ensued, leaving one of them dead.

Dangosa said two officers were wounded in the escape. *Edson Fernandez and Charlie Saloso, Inquirer Mindanao*

■ DUMAGUETE CITY

Detachment opposed

RESIDENTS of Common village in Sta. Cruz, Bansalan del Sur are opposed to the plan of the military here putting up a detachment in their area as it would endanger the villagers.

In a statement launched by Inquirer, the Bansalan People's Alliance Against Militarization (BPAAM) said the presence of soldiers in the area for night was a trouble than peace to their village.

The military said Sitio Cruz is one of Southern Mindanao areas where the New People's Army operates and that soldiers are being deployed there to protect residents.

Elito T. Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao

■ TUGUEGARAO CITY

Calamity state in Cagayan

THE PROVINCIAL board over city declared Cagayan under a state of calamity after Typhoon "Karen" (Nida) spelt P116 million worth of crops and infrastructure in the province.

The board passed the resolution declaring a state of calamity in Cagayan following recommendations from Gov. Alvin Antonio and provincial social welfare officer Tita Juanis. The typhoon destroyed about 400 houses, damaged 10,000 houses and dislocated 10,000 families.

In Baggao, Gov. Dennyrose Victor Sandoval said the typhoon left at least P116 million in crop and infrastructure damage in his province. *Franklin Calide and Lawrence Bulong Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon*

■ NAGA CITY

Security tightened vs crimes

THE CITY government has sent out civilian volunteers and deployed them to key areas, following the incidence of robberies and thefts in the city within 24 hours, just days after the slaying of a retired supervisor and a foiled cash robbery/carnapping in nearby Bicol town, causing two among residents.

The latest victim was identified as Fatima Benita of Sta. Cruz Norte, Iriga City, police said.

Benita was still sick to death on Wednesday night with a gunshot wound in the head. Examiners Rio, authorities was examining her clothes in her house this house in Barangay Tabugan Norte, police said.

In the early morning of Wednesday, before Benita's killing, Edwin Bonano, 29, of Ligao City, and a nurse, was killed by a still unidentified assailant.

The suspect took some of Bonano's personal belongings, including a Nokia 6600 cellular phone, a portable DVD player an Epad, digital camera, ATM card, and an HSBC credit card.

Jesse Zaldivar Gobio, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Baguio told to prepare for Mindanao migrants

BAGUIO CITY—GOVERNMENT social workers have asked the city government to prepare for the arrival of migrants fleeing the conflict in Mindanao because it was caught flatfooted by an earlier wave of refugees who came to Baguio between 1990 and 2000.

Developing a shelter, food and relocation program now would help the city government manage the influx of these families, some of whom use their children to beg in the streets, said Betty Pangasian, city social welfare officer.

She said many residents are content to flee the city now that Typhoon Frank has left.

Families from Isabela province who have decided to stay in the summer capital and relax have been sleeping along streets and in local parks with toddlers in tow.

The city government has asked universities, religious organizations and civic groups to help communicate with these families because they refuse help, Pangasian said.

Housing

Housing has also become a problem for the many influx of Islamic Mindanao families, many of whom are Internet peddlers.

Pangasian said social workers are more concerned that families, with as many as 11 members, end up renting a room in some villages here.

Some constructed their settlement because their landlords were unable to cope with their visitors or because no other families were left to relocate, she said.

She said preparing for the refugee influx does not necessarily mean planning for more relocations, but the city government must coordinate how much food or shelter it can offer to them so they can live humanely and peacefully in the city.

Housing could also shed light on how residents cope more than refugees, said Dialogue professor Gil Bawas, who is helping coordinate an

"We need to help reaching them. We need to earn their trust...."

interfaith youth dialogue called Peace Trek.

Bawas said neighborhoods and Christian leaders have been wary about the increasing presence of these families although they have not discussed this openly.

Local review

The social welfare offices of Baguio and the Pangalayan order of Dagupan and Urdaneta have also started reviewing their workload because these cities have assisted returning Ilagan families of migrants, Pangasian said.

"The [Mindanao workers] are easier to deal with because they are organized and they help police themselves. They also accept help," she said.

But some families, Pangasian said, refuse assistance and regulation.

She said the Department of Social Welfare and Development has asked local governments to educate these families in Mindanao or send them to refugee communities in Caraga.

She said some of the families need to live in the crowded villages of Pangasinan and La Union but have more trust for their relatives in the province because their Christian faith runs deeper than found in tourist populations more preserved, Pangasian said.

She said their reports indicated that many of them could face ill will because of their backgrounds and their relationships and efforts to relocate only to return to Baguio weeks later.

"My task photographs of them, but others they refuse. they give as different names and family backgrounds. We show them their photographs and tweet, 'This is you,' but they think to their new circles," Pangasian said.

"We need help reaching them. We need to earn their trust," she said.

Thelma Gutierrez, Inquirer Northern Luzon

GMA joins Pampanga rites for 1st Filipino cardinal

GUAGUA, PAMPANGA—President Macapagal-Arroyo on Tuesday joined her Ambeth province turned in honoring the late Rufino Cardinal Santos, the first Filipino cardinal, during rites celebrating his 104th birth anniversary here.

Mr Arroyo attended Mass officiated by Manila Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, San Fernando Archbishop Paciano Aniceto, Papanggayan Bishop Roberto Mallari, Pablo Virgilio David, Archbishop Oscar Cruz, Teodoro Bacani and Antipolo Bishop Gaudencio Rosales.

At the Mass prior Mr. Arroyo was a rare many from Gov. Eddie Panlilio, Dr. Arlyn Villanueva, president of Our Holy Angel University, the co-organizer of the event, on to become the two officials.

Panlilio was named host to Pampanga Rep. Aurea Miguel "Miguel" Arroyo.

Mr Arroyo and Panlilio exchanged souls during the prayer offering. The young Arroyo and Panlilio drank hands.

Born as Father who was a fiery preacher and a mother with 13 children, Santos grew up in a house hostel 30 meters from what is now the Immaculate Conception Church, the center of the communal event.

He entered the San Carlos Seminary in 1921. Sailed Cunard Line in 1930, completed his doctorate in sacred Theology in 1933 and ordained into the priesthood on Oct. 28 that same year.

Savior

Besides, told Santos saved the life of Manila Archbishop Michael O'Doherty by admitting to the Japanese Army that it was he as a secretary of the archbishop, who drawn the blueprint of the post, including Hapon guerrillas.

Refusing to collaborate with the Japanese Army Santos was arrested in death but was pleaded out by Japanese liberation forces on the night of his execution.

Succeeding O'Doherty and Archbishop Gabriel Reyes, Santos became archbishop of Manila in 1953 at the age of 45. He led the reconstruction of the archdiocese and that of the war-damaged Manila Cathedral.

He founded the Catholic charities now known as Caritas Manila, and the reconstruction of St. Paul Hospital (now the Cardinal Santos Medical Center), as an alumnus of the Philippine Trust Company and the Catholic Travel Office. Founder of the Radio Veritas and built the Our Lady of Guadalupe Minor Seminary.

First cardinal

Pope John XXIII made Santos a cardinal on March 31, 1960. He first Filipino to become in after 400 years of Christianity to the Philippines.

What was not known to many, Panlilio said, is that Santos was a diabetic and that he suffered from a malignant brain tumor.

Cebu's Ricardo Cardinal Vidal sent a message hailing the day as a milestone in the history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

Andrews urged the faithful to live by the text and faith of Christ as the, he said, defended the church against persecution and colonialism.

After the Mass, Mr Arroyo and Panlilio unveiled a shrine statue of Santos sculpted by Eugenio Jose Ecleberto Jose beside the church.

She also inaugurated the Cardinal Rufino Santos Memorabilia Exhibit set up on the second floor lobby of the old church. Silhouettes also presented to her a copy of the book "Ruler Among, the First Filipino Cardinal" by Augustinian brother Francis Musni. *Rosalie Ocfemia, Inquirer Central Luzon*

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

What Gloria failed to see at Port Irene

By Philkim Gaurana
Santa Ana, Cagayan

ABOUT 2,000 ha are waiting for the start of the Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Freeport in Barangay Centro Integrado in Santa Ana, Cagayan. At far left is Port Irene, where the Japanese troops are estimated.

WHEN RESIDENTS OF SANTA ANA TOWN IN Cagayan heard that President Macapagal-Arroyo was visiting the Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Freeport last month, they thought she would look into reports of vehicle smuggling at Port Irene or into their complaints against online casinos operating in their midst.

They were disappointed.

Ms Arroyo's lightning visit on July 31 was actually meant to brief her on the development plans of the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (Ceza) by its chair and chief executive officer, Jose Maria Ponce.

Ceza is a government-owned and -controlled corporation tasked with converting the 54,130-hectare CSEZF into "world-outstanding industrial, commercial, financial, investment, tourism and recreational center and free port."

But for Rebecano Severino Sanchez, 44, the national government must also address the development of the CSEZF first, he says, but started to bring misery to the people of Santa Ana (pop: 21,000).

"Santa Ana is no longer the peaceful, clean and beautiful town that we grew up with. It is now fast becoming a community dominated by the evils of progress," Sanchez says.

The residents share headaches from that their town is starting to deteriorate despite the so-called progress that its proponents proclaim. The developments in Santa Ana, mainly the establishment of online casinos, have brought in thousands of foreigners, mostly Chinese that, the residents say, have upset the town's social equilibrium.

A fish BOX has been long recently with the arrival of imported used cars at Port Irene. REPORTER

Threatened

The private beaches, they say, are now threatened by the incessant disposal of solid and liquid wastes from these casinos.

Basic food supplies, such as rice, vegetables and fish, which used to be abundant, have become scarce, and the cost of basic commodities has risen, pushed by the huge food demand from the online gaming establishments.

Its, a master feeling of helplessness amidst the people against these issues, given the necessity of the powers exercised by Ceza and its officials in the past 11 years of its operations.

Republic Act No. 7922, or the Cagayan Economic Zone Act of 1995, converts the 54,000-hectare of Santa Ana, situated at the northeastern tip of the Luzon mainland, and three nearby islands under the town of Aparri—Fuga, Babi and Mabilang.

The residents said the Ceza law was conceived, passed and implemented without their having been told about what it actually means to them, except for one promise: development.

Unhampered growth

The birth and growth of the CSEZF was virtually unhampered, save no human area when they were smuggling to cope with the sudden change of the local physical, social and political landscapes, they opted to keep quiet.

Local officials say that while they try to harmonize their functions with policies being laid out by the Ceza management, conflicts still arise. And in case of conflict, the Ceza law is almost always consulted.

Section 11 of the Ceza charter says that "[in] case of any conflict between the [Ceza] and the municipalities of Santa Ana and Aparri as mentioned in affecting the [CSEZF] other than in the fiscal and security matters, the decision of Ceza shall prevail."

Some officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, note that this provision undermines the local Government Code, which, they say, is cited for a town like Santa Ana.

For instance, employees in the engineering office fear that there will be some stripped of its authority to issue building permits as the Ceza management seeks to take its role as the building regulatory agency within the zone.

A case in point is the ongoing expansion of Sunrise Holiday and Leisure Resort, where about 100 villas are being constructed on a four-hectare property.

Approval by the municipal building official was not sought, said an official, who asked not be identified for fear that he might lose his job.

Recently jointly operated by the Chinese firm Grand Walk Technology Leasing in Green Ltd., is one of two casino complexes operating inside the CSEZF and hosting 40 companies with online gambling licenses from Host Lagacies Leisure and Resort Corp. (PCLRC).

PCLRC is the "master licensee" appointed by Ceza by Internet gaming operations. The online gaming industry is known not to have announced SM tourists a month and has been earning around 19.28 million yearly, Ceza officials say.

Delineation

Ponce, however, dismisses the view that Ceza undermines the Local Government Code.

"[The establishment of Ceza] all the more reinforces the [town governments of Santa Ana] because it has become the biggest beneficiary of the development that is brought into the zone. I don't understand why the beneficiary will have these kinds of complaints," he says.

Both Ceza and the local government have undertaken a delineation of powers and functions. Ponce says, to ensure that one entity does not encroach on the jurisdiction of the other.

"Ah-an [part of the] national government and our task is to invite international investors. We look at the overall economic development not only of Cagayan but also of Southern Luzon. The LGU primarily looks after the welfare of the local community. That's quite very clear," he says.

But Ponce admits that the local government has to get permission from Ceza for whatever development project it plans for the town. He says the projects should conform with the town's long-term development plan.

Mayor Nicholas Victor Antipuesto says the local government and Ceza management do not see any conflict in their affairs in relation to the Ceza law.

"There may be some issues that may have been misunderstood or complex, but sometimes these are just due to the individual actions of some Ceza personnel. These are very minor and both parties are doing some efforts so that these issues are sorted out before they get out of proportion," he says.

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Toxic starfish killing reefs in Pangasinan

BOLINAO, PANGASINAN – Corals are just starting to flourish here and in western Pangasinan towns but spiny and toxic starfish that have invaded the marine protected areas are threatening to stop their growth.

The crown-of-thorns starfish (*Acanthaster planci*) are a plague of corals as they voraciously eat the polyps by spreading their stomach over the corals and using digestive enzymes to liquefy the tissues.

"The corals should have established but these have been consumed by starfish," Arsenio Gabarda, a Bolinao mayor, said.

"The damage in the pristine protected areas [MPAs] is quite bad," said scientist Edgardo Gomez, who has been conducting study on coral reefs in the country since 1976.

He said some breathing room have been arranged. "The crown-of-thorns starfish are vocal that its coasts as they could dominate an entire reef area," he said.

The starfish infestation was one of the issues discussed during several forum on coastal resources management.

Spines

The type of starfish has thumb-like spines spanning all over its body. It grows to up to 40 cm (15.5 inches) and has 12 to 19 arms extending from the center. Its sting can inflict great pain or trauma.

Gabarda said there first saw the thorny starfish in the MPAs sometime in 2006 and an outbreak occurred in April this year in the region Bolinao area here.

Gabarda, president of the Samahan ng Kristohan ng mga Jesuahan Alay sa Kalikasan, a federation of fishermen groups in Bolinao town, said they had to remove the coral reefs manually, put them in right zones to prevent larvae from escaping and then buried them.

He said it was difficult to remove the thorny because they had to hollow areas in the coral reefs "so we could avoid the starfish are out in the open before collecting and burying them."

Aluminio Mayo Hermani Bragueta said the thorny starfish are seen in the Hundred Islands National Park and in the city's MPAs, but no outbreak has so far occurred.

"We do not know the extent of damage they inflicted on the corals," he said.

Manual work

Like in the other town, divers from Bolinao remove the starfish manually and bury them.

In initial tests of Ando, Mayor Hermie Rubio said a starfish scourge occurred last summer when hundreds of thousands of the species swarmed in the town's marine sanctuaries.

"It is very difficult to remove them. You have to be careful because if you break them, they will multiply more times," he said.

Jun Cuenca, leader of the fishery monitoring and enforcement group in the town, said the last time they cleaned up the marine area in June where infestation was still widespread.

Gomez said crown-of-thorns starfish have also threatened reefs in Palawan and Mindoro.

Yolanda Ander Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon

AID RUSH

A woman carries her child as she rushes to a distribution center for relief goods for villagers who fled fighting between government soldiers and separatist Moro guerrillas. Most evacuees left behind farms in their villages, becoming dependent on relief goods.

NFA to buy more palay from Bohol farmers

By Ka Bagsipo
Inquirer Visayas

TAGBILARAN CITY—THE NATIONAL FOOD Authority (NFA) will increase the volume of rice it would buy from tilled rice farmers.

"We will be buying some 500,000 bags this season so that farmers can sell their harvests at a much higher price," said Mla. Bohol assistant manager Ella Bendaño.

The figure is three times as much as its regular procurement program in the past years, Bendaño said.

She said the NFA would deploy mobile procurement and field survey teams in towns to make it more convenient for farmers to sell their products.

The buying price would also depend on the purity and moisture content of the palay, Bendaño said.

The NFA will buy clean and dry palay with 14 percent moisture content and a minimum of 95 percent purity at P17 per kg.

The NFA will also offer P1,000 cash incentive for every 10 bags of palay sold to the agency.

"The more they harvest, the bigger the cash assistance they get," Bendaño added.

Bohol Gov. Edgar Aumentado has expressed concern over the plummeting prices of palay.

Aumentado learned that commercial traders have been buying palay at P12 per kg.

Due to lack of access to capital to interest and the increasing farm production costs, farmers in the province were forced to borrow money from commercial buyers that serve as a cash advance to secure the their yield in a particular cropping season.

The practice, locally known as *utang*, leaves the farmers at the mercy of big rice traders who would dictate the price of palay.

Aumentado has directed the provincial agriculture office and the NFA to investigate the commercial buyers who allegedly pay only P12 per kg of palay.

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MEMBERS of the Coast Guard and the Philippine Air Force search the waters of Davao Gulf near Samal Island and Davao City for the wreckage of the C-130 plane of the Philippine Air Force that crashed on Monday night.

'Hercules' goes down in Davao Gulf; 9 missing

Crash a loss to AFP capability to ferry troops

THE CRASH OF A PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE (PAF) C-130 Hercules cargo plane on Monday night reduced the military's capability to ferry troops for its offensive against rebels in Mindanao, a ranking official of the Armed Forces of the Philippines said yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Jorge Segovia, military spokesperson for the Central Mindanao conflict, said that it remained possible that the AFP would have to send additional troops to the areas of conflict.

However, he said that most of the battalions needed to Maguindanao and Lanao del Norte, the two major fronts in the ongoing offensive against Moro rebels, were already in place.

The ill-fated C-130 was only one of two operational cargo planes of the Air Force, which has long been trying to cope with an antiquated fleet due to lack of funding for its modernization.

Air Force chief Lt. Gen. Federico Cadiangan said the C-130 had brought a big number of troops, mostly Scout Rangers, to Davao City from Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija to reinforce troops in Central Mindanao. Nikko Dizon

Paragraph 1

lated by 10st. Manuel Zambrano Jr. were off the radar, coastal residents started retrieving human body parts and plane debris, including pilot manuals, identification cards, a flight plan, pictures and random items, on shores not far from the airport.

As of press time last night, no survivors have been found but rescue teams said they were not ruling out the possibility of people being still alive.

Officials have found no lead on how the 37.6-ton plane ended up in Esperanza at sea.

Besides Zambrano, eight other Air Force personnel were aboard the plane, officials said. It had not reported any sign of trouble before it crashed.

Midair explosion

There were conflicting reports on the weather prevailing at the time of the crash.

Air Force officials said the night skies were clear but some rescue officials said on television that the residents had told them there was a squall blowing and that they saw lightning and heard "an explosion" before the plane went down.

Originally, the plane had come from Lanao and ferried Scout Rangers to Davao for deployment in the military's campaign against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the military said.

The Hercules then took off for Jolo at 9:51 p.m. on Monday to pick up as many 300 officers of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) and fly them to Manila, according to Air Force chief Lt. Gen. Federico Cadiangan.

Minutes after takeoff, contact was lost. That was after Zambrano last message saying he was making a left turn onto the regular air route, a routine maneuver.

Crash site

The military said the crash site had been spotted at 600 feet deep of waters between Davao City's Sasa Area wharf and Talicud island just across from the city. Searchers expected seeing oil slick and bodybloes.

Early last night, the head of a search and rescue team said a silhouette of what could possibly be the main body of the crashed C-130 had been detected.

Navy Capt. Benjamin Gonzales, task force commander, told reporters by phone that while there had been no "visual per se" of the plane's wreckage, a fish-finder sonar reflected a cylindrical object on the sea bed that seemed to be the body of an aircraft.

Gonzales said the object lay 600 feet deep and 2.5 nautical miles southwest of Samal Island.

The military does not have an equipment that could reach objects that have sunk that deep, Gonzales said.

Possible survivors

Gonzales said the search and rescue team had not ruled out the possibility that there could still be survivors from the crash.

"It's just day one and we could say that in rescue operations in disasters such as this, you don't discount that there are survivors in the first 24 hours," Gonzales said.

Cadiangan, for his part, said: "We still can't officially conclude that there were no survivors but all indications are leading to that."

A list provided by the Air Force information office in Manila showed the C-130 was also carrying copilot Capt. Adrian de Dios and seven air crew: Capt. Constantino Lobrigas and Staff Sergeants John Arenda, Gary Delmas, Felix Jesus Parreiro, Patricio Cano Jr., Adolfo Dimaculangan and Reynaldo Fernandez.

Probe under way

Two Army personnel were also reportedly aboard the C-130 but their identities were not immediately known, according to sources from the 4th Force in Davao.

Air Force officials in Manila said that only the two pilots and seven crew members were on board but that they were checking the Davao report.

"Let's hope there are people alive," Maj. Armand Hico, spokesperson of the Eastern Mindanao Command, said in Filipino.

Air Force officials said the cause of the crash was still being investigated.

Bernardo Arevalo Jr., a resident of Buacan, said he saw the plane flying low above his house around 9 p.m. He said he could hear its loud engines and he saw its lights on.

From his porch, Serafina said he saw the plane "nosedive" and he later heard a second similar to an object hitting the water.

"It was drizzling as I grabbed an umbrella and went outside. I wanted to find out what happened to it but I could not see anything," Serafina said.

He said he was hoping authorities would soon arrive "but until 11 p.m., nobody arrived."

No sign of trouble

Among the debris found on the shoreline were "a head [and] body parts," PAF information chief Maj. Gerardo Zamudio Jr. said.

A dismembered foot and fingers, Inoks, a scalp, and tattered military uniforms were recovered on the shores, members of Gonzales' rescue team said.

Cadiangan said the ill of Fernandez, one of those aboard, was among those recovered on the Aplaya district shoreline.

Earlier on Monday, Maj. Donald Mackerang, a pilot, flew the same plane from Manila to Lanang City and back before turning it over to Zambrano. He said it carried navigational documents similar to those recovered in Davao's shores.

Mackerang said the C-130 showed no sign of trouble during the two hours and 15 minutes he handled the plane.

What a C-130 is

Air Force officials considered the crash the worst military aviation accident in recent memory and the second involving a C-130 cargo plane, the military's workhorse used in troop and supply transport.

A C-130 crash was recorded in Naga City in the 1990s, officials said.

"What I'm very much saddened about is our pilots and crew," Cadiangan said.

The all-weather C-130 is a product of Lockheed and is a four-engine turboprop. The aircraft plane was manufactured in 1971 and commissioned by PAF in 1983.

Capable of takeoffs and landings from unprepared runways, the C-130, which was originally designed as a troop, medical evacuation, and cargo transport aircraft, has been in continued production for the past 50 years already.

Bearing a newly replaced engine, the plane was carrying around six hours worth of fuel when it took off, said PAF officials.

Pilot error unlikely

Without drawing any conclusions from eye reports from the ground, Cadiangan said pilot error was unlikely given Cardiano's long experience as a C-130 pilot and flight instructor. The Air Force also believed weather could not have been a problem.

Still, investigators said they would look at all angles, even the possibility of sabotage.

"Right now, we keep an reviewing our accident procedures. Until such time we can't get any evidence, we will not discount any factor," Cadiangan said.

He said the plane's age could not have been a factor all PAF planes had been well-maintained.

The Air Force has sent a 16-member investigation team to find out what really happened.

"We will look at all possible angles," said the investigation team leader, Maj. Gen. Jessie Cammad. With reports from Dennis Jeanne and Jeffrey Tupaz, Inquirer Mindanao, and Julie Lalog-Arevalano in Manila

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ONSITE INSPECTION: On Tuesday, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno surveys one of the houses burned by MILF rebels in Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte. With him are PNP Director Leopoldo Bataoil and Kolambugan Mayor Bobran Lumaque. RAFY CABAL

LAMENTATIONS: Relatives of the victims of the ongoing clashes between MILF and government troops wail over their graves during a mass held at the Lapayan cemetery in Linamon, Lanao del Norte. LYNN ALVAREZ

WHICH WAY IS PEACE GOING? Here, rebels are on the premises of Darapanan, the MILF's main camp in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. JEFFREY HUTCHINSON (INQUIRER MINDANAO)

Death toll mounts in Mindanao clashes

From page A1

have been her third child, later died. "Her left arm was amputated by seven wounds," Marbel Saldi, a volunteer for the local councilor, insists.

Sabanita was one of the civilians killed in Datu Piang in the military offensive to get Ameril Ombra Kato, a field commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) blamed for pillaging several towns in South Cotabato.

Kato had gone on a rampage, the MILF said, disgruntled at the failure of the government to sign in Malaysia on Aug. 5 an accord on an expanded Bangsamoro homeland. The Supreme Court had stopped the deal, aimed at ending four decades of civil strife that had left 120,000 people dead, following protests from local Christian officials.

The military said that troops had mounted now the weekend the firepower artillery barrage combined with air strikes in Datu Piang, Shariff Aguak and Mamasapano, killing 25 MILF fighters and bringing the overall MILF fatalities in the area to 123.

The five civilian dead in Datu Piang reported now the weekend by Dr. Elizabeth Jumalon, Maguindanao provincial physician, were the first to emerge in the province.

Erratic MILF mortars

Hbi. Armand Rico, spokesperson of the Eastern Mindanao Command based in Davao City, denied that the military was responsible for the civilian deaths.

He said it was more likely the civilians were hit by misguided MILF mortar shells. "Their firing device is not accurate," he said.

Yesterday, the National Disaster Coordinating Center (NDCC) in Camp Aguinaldo reported that the number of fighting in Mindanao had claimed 53 lives. The latest count included a 6-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy who died in a mortar shelling at Barangay Biniliro in Datu Piang.

A 7-year-old girl, Rohiyah, was wounded during a shelling on Saturday midnight at Biniliro, a marshy inland fishing village in Datu Piang.

Rohiyah said all that she could recall was that many of the villagers, including her family, were hiding underneath the concrete bridge not far from their shanties when the explosion occurred.

"They said the soldiers would not destroy the bridge, because it belonged to the government," Rohiyah said in the evacuation center hospital bed in Cotabato City. Several others were wounded in the attack on the bridge.

Kato reported wounded

The military has reported that a total of 17 soldiers and two militiamen had been killed in the fighting. The MILF has confirmed only seven fatalities.

The NDCC said fighting had affected 300,000 people, half of the number confined in evacuation centers.

The guns fell silent over the past few days in Maguindanao, according to Col. Ruben Salazar, commander of the 6th Infantry Division, and the military declared Kato had been wounded.

"He is wounded. They are silent and hiding but our soldiers are looking for them," Salazar said. He also said the rebels had run out of ammunition.

Lt. Col. Julieto Ando, spokesperson of the military's 6th Infantry Division, said the attempted kidnapping of Dr. Milagros Wajo in Cotabato City last week was an indication that a ranking MILF leader had been wounded.

"Usually in fighting, if a ranking MILF leader or commander will get hurt, they are going to kidnap physicians," Ando said.

READY, AIM, FIRE: Soldiers prepare their howitzer at their base in Shariff Aguak in Maguindanao before firing toward Moro rebels' position. JEFFREY HUTCHINSON (INQUIRER MINDANAO)

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu denied that Kato had been wounded. "The kidnapping angle is another black propaganda," he said.

Kabalu said that the lull in fighting was an obvious result of a government decision to halt its offensive. "The Army has stopped moving or our troops also stopped firing," Kabalu said.

Lanao del Norte front

On the other major battle front in Lanao del Norte province, at least 16 MILF fighters were killed and 18 others were wounded yesterday when the military bombarded and assaulted a rebel encampment in Pantao Piagapo, according to Army spokesperson Maj. Rosalvin Mangigue.

Five soldiers were reported wounded in the three-hour firefight.

The troops in Lanao del Norte were marching down Abdullah Macapaar, alias Commander Bravo, who was blamed for last week's attacks in Kauswagan and Kolambugan that left seven dead, mostly women and children.

Dozens of those killed in the area were civilians captured and used as human shields by retreating rebels before they were slaughtered.

Lanao lawmaker favors execution of rogue Moro reb

By Norman Bordadora

IF HE HAD HIS WAY, MILF Commander Abdullah Dimaporo would have Abdulla Macapaar, the rebel commander Bravo, executed.

"Yes, I am in favor of the execution of Bravo and those who attacked Lanao del Norte," Dimaporo said.

The Lanao del Norte congressman said the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) should rid itself of rogue elements like Macapaar to be effective in negotiating peace with the government.

"Unfortunately, they have no power and strength to execute Bravo, his cohorts and criminals. They are not employees of the MILF," Dimaporo said in a statement.

He said MILF field operations must stop raising funds through kidnapping, robbery and protection fees from companies and illegal loggers.

They only do what the MILF leaders ask them to do and that giving in to the Lanao del Norte could create a domino effect that would prompt other groups, including the communist rebels, to seek their own autonomous region.

Zubiri said that the necessary issue had been addressed by the Bangsamoro People's Rights law. He cited that in his hometown, where a third of the land was controlled by Ismail people through the Federation of Mintapading Tribal Communities, it would be "superfluous" to give them refunds that they already had.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said that while he recognized the need to "nurture our separate cultures, we should see beneath our national unity."

For Santiago declared whether there would be a road rally to create momentum to give the early ethnic minority life.

"How many are eligible? They have to meet the requirements of the Constitution which is they must have economic and distinctive cultural characteristics and heritage; they must have economic and social structure. They have to prove that they are a distinctive ethnic minority," she said.

With reports from Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Southern Luzon, and Ed C. Catbagan Jr. in Manila

The government has offered a P5-million reward each for the capture of Bravo and Kato, who were said to be leading the 1,000 fighters of the 12,000-strong MILF.

In Congress, Lanao del Norte Rep. Vicente Belmonte yesterday called for an investigation of the alleged failure of the Army and the Philippine National Police to respond to pleas for help by residents of Kauswagan Lapayan in Kauswagan during the MILF attacks on Aug. 18.

Respect our domain, 'lumad' tell Moro rebels

From page A1

digenous peoples.

"We respect their (MILF leaders') core claim of their ancestral domain, but they should also respect ours," said Timuay Datuling Mudlak, a convener of the Mindanao Peaceful Indigenous Peoples' Coalition who was the Bangsamoro technical forum by-laws.

Datuling gathered here for a two-day meeting on Monday to discuss the memorandum of agreement (MOA) on ancestral domain between the government and the MILF. The area was to be governed by the BJE.

The Supreme Court stopped the signing of the agreement in August last year with the recent following petitions filed by Mindanao politicians questioning its constitutionality. This three-some MILF leaders to attack civilian-populated towns in Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato and Sarangani, killing at least 49 people.

Senators divided

In Manila, senators were divided on the appeal of the lumad leaders to retain as autonomous region for them. Senators Manuel Villar and

"There is no constitutional impediment to a Lumad Autonomous Region. It is in some areas the majority are lumad. If they want their autonomous region, that will be allowable under the constitutional language," Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago told reporters.

But Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan flatly rejected moves to virtually break up the Bangsamoro homeland from the country as a "formula for chaos."

"As a people, we should learn to be able to respect their distinct cultures and their rich heritage without having to create self-governance mechanisms for them and every subdivision (ethnic/tribal) group like these," Pangilinan said in a text message to the bureau.

Unwritten agreement

Although the agreement between Misuari and lumad leaders of the past two years, Misuari said it had guided indigenous communities to be cautious about intruding into Moro territories. The pact is called the "sigay" for the Moro people and the "pukung" for the tribes.

"We do not want to violate the peace pact between our ancestors and the Moro people. We are scared to violate that," he said. He added that the agreement had provided peaceful coexistence between both parties for generations.

The lumad leaders said the unclear agreement was violated when their areas were included in the BJE. But while they were objecting to this provision in the MOA, Misuari said the lumad people wanted the issue resolved through dialogues.

Erma Gregorgracia Saludi of the Tagabawa-Talaandig said it would be better if the Moro and lumad leaders sign an agreement on territory first before the government signed the MOA.

"There should first be a memorandum of agreement, a pact as the community level between us the Lumad and the Moro, because we are the inhabitants of the lands they are talking about," Saludi said.

No consultations

The lumad leaders said the problem with the MOA was that they were never consulted.

Datu Miller, the MILF and the government panels never consulted us while they were drafting the MOA. We were surprised that our ancestral domains were included," said Bimbingkong Magkaya Limbid.

Mudlak said the tribal leaders would come up with a unified stand on the issue. "We are still on the process of finalizing our position on this matter. There should be more consultations in our communities. We want to clarify what there is to be finalized on yet whether we will sign part the MOA or not," he said as he clarified yesterday's business story.

But Mudlak said one thing was sure now: "We cannot accept that we are part of the Bangsamoro (Moro nation)."

Commissioner Jannie Lasimbang of the National Commission on the Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) said her agency would support whatever position the indigenous peoples (IPs) would reach on the MOA.

"This is an opportunity for the IPs to have a consensus on the issue. We support this gathering since this was actually organized by the IP leaders themselves, the NGOs and the NCIP are mere observers here. So whatever the decision they will come up, we will support it," Lasimbang said.

UN Permanent Forum

The chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has advised the indigenous leaders to avoid block efforts of the government and the MILF to pursue the MOA until their concerns are first heard.

In a message she sent from Ghana, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz said the indigenous people "have a strong basis to oppose the government and the MILF ... not to conclude or sign the [MOA] on ancestral domain and the final peace agreement until adequate consultations have been held."

She said the recently adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 1997 Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (Ipra) guarantees them "the right to determine whether [they] would like to be included" in the BJE and the Bangsamoro nation.

Corpuz, executive director of the Tebtebba Foundation, is based in Baguio City. Her message, which was posted on the Tebtebba website and released to the business on Monday, was delivered last week before a "lumad" conference in Palawan that tackled the controversial agreement between the government and the MILF.

"I express my sympathies with you and your communities who are now suffering from the impacts of armed operations being done by both the MILF and the Philippine Army," she said.

They should tell the government and the communities to "stop the armed operations [so that] we can continue our efforts to live in peace in your ancestral domains," she said.

Muslim Mindanao

Senator Santiago noted that while the Constitution stated that "there should be created autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao," it did not say that it should only be in areas where the Muslims were dominant.

"Where the law does not specify, we should not specify," she said.

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, who

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Judy Ann petition for tax case review junked

Supreme Court dismisses actress' motion for lack of merit; trial to go on

By Jerome Aning

THE SUPREME COURT YESterday turned down actress Judy Ann Santos' petition for a review of a Court of Tax Appeals en banc ruling denying her motion that she be given more time to file a petition for the review of a tax evasion case filed against her.

In a 27-page decision, the High Court's Third Division chaired by Associate Justice Leonardo Nazario Antiquiro unanimously ruled that the appellate tax court did not err when it dismissed the motion she filed on June 19, 2006.

"In sum, the CTA en banc did not err in denying petitioner's motion for reconsideration," the tribunal said.

Penned by the Justices, Santos' manager Alfie Lorenzo refused to comment on the issue. The actress, however, sent a text message through a friend that read, "Jesus! Dyos ko sa lang kasi kaming ito. Aasa't sasalpak na ako d'to. Iiling the case up to the Lord. I hope it will get resolved soon!)."

On Oct. 21, 2005, the Department of Justice filed a case against Santos in the tax court's first division for violating the National Internal Revenue Code, a charge she denied.

This was after the Bureau of Internal Revenue found "misrepresentations" in Santos' annual income tax return for 2002 during which she declared that she earned about P9.01 million. That was disputed, however, by the bureau that claimed her total income for the year totaled P14.4 million. It estimated she owned more than P1.7 million in back taxes, including penalties.

In January 2006, Santos' lawyers filed a motion to quash the case against her, saying the facts alleged by BIR's criminal information did not constitute an offense and that the offense who filed the case had no authority to do so. They also claimed that the tax court did not have jurisdiction over the case that was void from the start, being violative of due process and equal protection under the law.

JUDY ANN, A-22

SUPERIOR SERVICE
Signage of laundry shop found on Pio Margal Street in Sampaloc, Manila. MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

Comedian files complaint vs cashier for fraud

By Nancy C. Carvajal

TELEVISION HOST ARNEL IGNACIO HAS invited filed a complaint with the police against the employee of a gasoline station in San Juan City whom he accused of credit card fraud, forgery and theft.

Rochelle Guerrero, a cashier of the Caltex gasoline on Connecticut Street, however, denied all the charges against her when she showed up at the Eastern Police District headquarters.

Chief Insp. Rogelio Javier, EPD deputy chief for investigation and detective management, told Ignacio accused Guerrero of stealing his credit card and using it to make to pay for P15,000 worth of gas.

According to Ignacio, he only found out about the transaction when he received his credit card bill on Aug. 14. The transaction occurred after he used his card at the gasoline on July 16.

"I knew I did not use the card for the three days bill showed all transactions consumed from the gas station," the TV host said in his complaint.

Ignacio said he is convinced the cashier was the only one involved in the scam, adding that all the signatures on the credit card receipts were forgeries.

Ignacio's lawyer, Ricardo de los Santos, said the bank that issued the card could also be held liable because they allowed the transaction to proceed "despite the obvious forgery."

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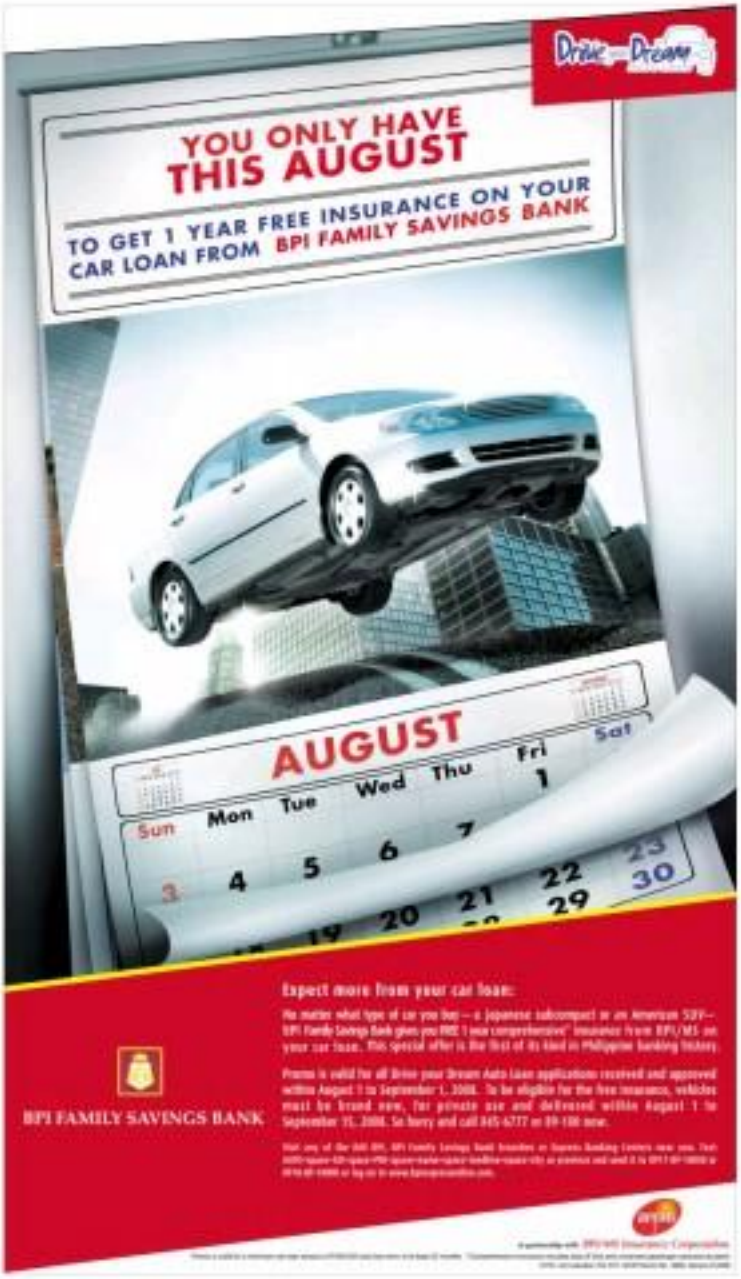
ABOUT 75 percent of Metro Manila children aged 12 to 23 months have complete vaccinations, according to the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey.

Cyril J. Donaldson, Inquirer Research



Couple face charges for 'unauthorized' use of credit cards

By Marlon Ramos

A DAUGHTER OF THE LATE Sen. Raul Roco and her husband, a grandson of President Manuel L. Quezon, are facing criminal charges for allegedly using—without authorization—the corporate credit cards of a company she used to work for to pay for their trips abroad.

Sophia Roco-Somorostro and her husband, Enrique Quezon-Avanzado, were charged with seven counts of violating Republic Act 8484, otherwise known as the Access Devices Regulation Code of 1998.

According to the law, an access device includes any account number, plate, electronic serial number, mobile code or personal identification number used to get money, goods and services.

Enrique is the son of Nini Quezon-Avanzado, President Quezon's only surviving daughter.

The cases, filed by Department of Justice prosecutors, were based on the complaints of senior executives of Information Gateway Inc., a Makati-based media content provider for telecommunications companies.

The cases were raffled off on Thursday to five Quezon City regional trial court branches.

A court employee, who agreed to speak on condition of anonymity, yesterday said the judges handling the cases are set to release warrants for the couple's arrest within the week.

When confined by the Inquirer, Enrique declined to comment on the cases although he described them as "cyclical" attacks and [the] latest in their attempts to silence me regarding the personal knowledge I have about the [and don't] it is earning billions from its concessionaire with a leading telco."

"I welcome my day in court as an avenue to expose these villainies," he said in a text message to the Inquirer yesterday.

He, however, declined to elaborate on the supposed "bad faith." It was not also clear how he came by the information about it was his wife, and not him, who was employed by the company.

In a nine-page decision, Mary Ann Tyrus, the DOJ assistant prosecutor overseeing the cases, said there was probable cause to charge the couple for "willfully, maliciously and feloniously [committing] access device fraud by effecting online banking."

Records showed that Sophia booked herself and Enrique on trips to Hong Kong, China, Macau and Qatar between February and May last year using three credit cards owned by the company. The couple's hotel accommodations were also charged to the firm.

The trips were booked after the left the company on Feb. 19, 2007, as contracts manager and executive assistant to the firm's chief executive officer, Eleanor Collangco.

The travel arrangements, which cost the company almost $13,000, were made online through expedia.com.

Tyrus said that as Collangco's executive assistant, Sophia had direct knowledge of the access and code number of the company's credit cards as her duties included paying for the overseas business trips of the firm's officials through the Internet.

"There is reasonable ground to believe that the offenses charged has been committed and the accused is probably guilty thereof," Tyrus said.

In their counter affidavit, the couple denied that they illegally used IG's credit cards for personal gain, saying the trips were part of the official travel where Sophia had received from the company when she resigned.

Enrique said the firm agreed to pay for their travels after they threatened to sue its officials before issuing death threats against his wife.

This happened, he added, after he and Sophia uncovered IG's "unscrupulous practice" of administratively disbursing cell phone credits from unsuspecting cell phone users.

MetroBriefs

Son of Manila City Hall official charged

THE SON of a Manila City Hall official was charged yesterday with homicide for the death of a bystander who was hit by a stray bullet during a shootout in Quezon City last month the age. The Quezon City Police District Criminal and Investigation and Detection Unit filed homicide charges against Paulo Ernesto Gonzalez, 27, son of Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim's executive secretary, Rolbetto Gonzalez. In the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office for the death of Ms. Teresita Manuel. Manuel, who died several days after she was shot, was among eight persons who were hit when an armed man inside a shoot at the wake Gonzalez at the corner of Quezon and Aurelia Avenues on May. Mike Nogales on June 15. The younger Gonzalez and two of his friend's escorts traded shots with the alleged gunman, Christopher Manuta, who was killed. QCPD-DDU chief Supt. Franklin Moises Mabanag told the heaven that it was the bullet from the younger Gonzalez' gun, a .38 caliber revolver registered in his name, that killed Manuel. Mabanag said this was based on reports submitted by Scene of the Crime Operatives and a certification issued by the Firearms and Explosives Division in Camp Crame confirming the accused's ownership of the gun.

—Jeannette I. Andrade

Jail guards asked to submit to police probe

POLICE yesterday asked Manila City Jail guards to submit themselves to an investigation following a riot on Saturday between rival gangs detained inside the facility. Six inmates were killed in the incident while another was wounded. Both sides members of the Sigue-Sigue Commando which has long been at odds with the Bahala Na Gang. Chief Insp. Generoso Borrado, head of the Manila Police District Homicide division, said the jail guards were asked to surrender their firearms and undergo paraffintests. "This would help us determine who fired the shots which killed the victims as if the bullets that hit the victims came from one of their jail guards guns," he said. "The results of the ballistic and paraffin tests will be cross-matched with the spent shells recovered at the crime scene." Borrado said he also asked the jail guards to submit affidavits on what they did when the riot broke out.

—Tina C. Santos

Belmonte: Claim reconstituted land titles now

TO PREVENT the manufacture of fake land titles, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. yesterday called on property owners to claim their reconstituted land titles after a fire that razed the city hall in 1984 damaged thousands of important documents. According to Belmonte, more than 7,000 reconstituted land titles have yet to be released from the Land Registration Authority office on East Avenue. "This is one of the surest things in Quezon City," the mayor said in a statement, urging owners returning to the reclaimed land titles. Some 40,000 certificates of land owners ship went up in ashes when a fire engulfed the Quezon City Hall on June 16, 1984. Jesus Dias Santos, head of the city government's Land Titling Unit (LTU), said almost 30,000 land titles have been reconstituted and given to landowners since 2000. To expedite the distribution of land titles, Belmonte ordered Santos to notify the rightful property owners that the documents can be claimed from the LTU of the City Assessor's Office. "We cannot give assurance that the only genuine owners will come to claim at last to prevent the duplication and overlapping of land titles in the city, particularly in government-owned properties," Belmonte said.

—Marlon Ramos

Exhibit industry forum set on Aug. 27-28

A FORUM on the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibition (MICE) industry will be held on Aug. 27 and 28 at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza. Among the topics on the forum are trends in the MICE market, emerging possible destinations and the exhibition industry in the Philippine setting. Cecile Dayrit, president of the Philippine Association of Convention and Exhibition Organizers Inc., said they wanted to identify new opportunities for the Philippines and help position it as a destination for exhibitions and conventions.

Ocean Park gets 5 freshwater crocodiles from Palawan

By TJ Burgonio

TOURISTS HERE NOT YET TO FILIPINOS to take a look at one of only two species of crocodiles in the country.

Five juvenile freshwater crocodiles once held in captivity at a wildlife center in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, have just been added to the Manila Ocean Park's collection of wild animals.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources signed yesterday a memorandum of agreement with park operator Chinu Oceanic Philippines Inc. (Cope) to lend the crocodiles to the park for three years.

The crocodiles, all females, belong to the Crocodylus mindorensis species (freshwater crocodile), one of only two species in the country. The other is the Crocodylus porosus or saltwater crocodile.

"Seeing the crocodiles will inspire the public to help conserve these animals that have been bred to captivity at the Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center," Environment Secretary Lito Atienza said.

He said he was confident park officials would be able to handle these crocodiles well, and "be able to disseminate information about its importance in our overall biodiversity."

For its part of the deal, the park, the country's first ecotourism, would turn over P50,000 each year to the Palawan

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Lito Atienza and Manila Ocean Park president Lim Chee Tiong are free five young freshwater crocodiles, now residents of the facility. ALEX CORONEL

farm to support conservation and research activities on crocodiles.

These would include studies to determine the distribution and conservation status of the freshwater crocodiles, the threat to their survival, and the extent of their remaining habitats.

The DENR established the wildlife center in Puerto Princesa City in 1986 to conserve the freshwater and saltwater crocodiles.

Under the MOA, the park should guarantee that the freshwater crocodiles be used strictly for public education, awareness and research, and not be used for breeding purposes.

The Philippine crocodile, considered a critically endangered animal, is relatively small, growing not more than three meters. It is believed that the primary cause of its reduced numbers today is commercial exploitation.

But the current threat is mainly from the removal of a suitable habitat for agricultural purposes or namely a rapidly expanding human population, MOP said in a statement.

"We are very happy that are we were considered to be part of conservation and preservation efforts of the Philippine crocodile," said George Uy, head of MOP's commercial department. With Paolo G. Santos

Singing MMDA chair knows what to do with prize

By Dil Tiu

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority clearly knows what to do with the prize money if he wins the top award for the reality TV contest "Celebrity Duets."

"I'm going to use the P1 million to fund my candidacy for president in 2010," Bayani Fernando said at a press conference yesterday.

Fernando was only kidding, of course, judging by his twinkling eyes.

But to those who've heard him talk about his presidential aspirations, Fernando's "joke" was an unforgiving scenario.

The MMDA chair is competing in the second season of GMA 7's reality TV contest pairing famous personalities who are nonprofessional singers with different singers every week.

Last Saturday, the show's musical director, Fernando pianist "Macho Gonzalez" with singer Rona Tenazas, an alumnus of his victims of "Search for Stars" or a closeness shocker Metro Manila by 2014.

Fernando, who has performed as one of "Manila's Three Tenors" with fellow public officials Sergio Apostol, Lito Lapid and Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes, said his stint on "Duets" was actually a "big risk."

"There are no second takes. So you have to do your best," he told reporters. There, he proceeded to ask the reporters to rate the best he ever.

"There are several members of my family, anyway, so I'm sure I can muster plenty of votes," he said. Later, Fernando added with a smile: "I might have to resort to vote buying."

Winners on the show are determined by a panel of judges and by the number of votes they receive through text messages sent in by supporters.

Fernando shrugged off criticisms that his participation in the TV show, and to accompany media exposure, was an unfair form of campaigning for his presidential bid.

"This has nothing to do with politics. There's nothing political about this," said the MMDA chair whose party, Lakas, had not yet formally announced an official standard-bearer for the 2010 polls.

But even before the show was aired, Fernando's participation on "Duets" already drew flak from a group of militants, who called him a modern day "Hitler" and an administration puppet—in the same breath.

"It is not only done in bad taste. This modern day Hitler is not fooling a segment of the ruling political syndicate in Malacañang joined the singing reality show for celebrities in the name of his cruel intentions and obsession for power," said Pamalakaya, an alliance of progressive fishfolk.

The group is usually vocalizing on the collective intelligence of the Filipino people and to the tens of thousands of urban poor and struggling vendors in Metro Manila who suffered so much in the brutal hands of the MMDA chief and his principal benefactor Malacañang and the Philippine National Oil Company-Philippine Hiking unit.

The MMDA chair, however, said all his actions were only for the betterment of the metropolis.

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Judy Ann . . .

From page A21

Their motion, however, was denied by the tax court's first division on Feb. 21 while an appeal for reconsideration was also dismissed on May 13.

On June 1, Gancayco asked the appellate tax court en banc to give her more time to file a petition for review which she submitted on June 16. Her petition, however, was denied by the court three days later.

"Petitioner cannot file a petition for review with the CTA en banc to appeal the resolutions of the CTA 1st Division denying petitioner's motion for reconsideration is indiscovery and, thus, unappealable. Even if her petition for review is to be treated as a petition for certiorari, it is dismissible for lack of merit," the High Court ruled.

"The denial of the motion to quash means that the criminal information remains pending with the court, which must proceed with the trial to determine whether the accused is guilty of the crime charged therein," it added.

The justices said they were "unconvinced" by Santos' only basis for her claim that she had been denied her right to equal protection. The dismissal of similar charges against singer-actress Regine Velasquez-Alcasid, the case against her contained.

The tax court said Santos did not establish whether she and Velasquez were similarly situated, or that they committed identical acts for which they were charged and that they promoted similar arguments and evidence. With Inquirer Research Bridget Jr.

Cops cite Commonwealth, Edsa as accident-prone areas

By Jeannette I. Andrade

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE and Edsa have been identified as the most traffic accident-prone thoroughfares in Quezon City.

Quezon City Police District Traffic Enforcement Unit (QCPD-TEU) head Superintendent Rodrigo Rabaya attributed the large number of traffic mishaps—almost 70% of the total reported incidents from January to July—to the volume of vehicles traversing the major thoroughfares.

Rabaya explained that more cars pass through the two highways at high speeds, increasing the likelihood of collisions between vehicles.

He discounted the presence of the Metro Manila Development Authority U-turn slots and pink lanes as the cause of most vehicular mishaps along Edsa and Commonwealth Avenue.

For the period of January to July a total of 4,442 road accidents were reported in Quezon City.

The lowest number of traffic accidents were recorded in July, at 488 incidents, or 46 percent lower than mishaps tallied in April (883), when more vehicles are on the streets for family outings as the month is the start of the provincial breaks of the summer vacation.

Based on the report, out of the total road accidents, 77 had fatalities, 298 had casualties while 4,069 resulted in damaged property.

Chief Inspector Rabaya attributed human error most often to the accidents, particularly among motorcycle drivers. "These drivers may be using their cellular phones while driving," he stressed.

Other motorists who figured in mishaps involved drivers they drove too close to other cars while suddenly stopped or accelerated their speed too much.

Rabaya likewise revealed that most of the traffic accidents in the city occur between 10 a.m. and 12 noon. The number of reports decrease slightly yards on the northbound.

The QCPD-TEU chief likewise noted that most drivers who figure in traffic accidents never took lessons in driving school.

Pakistan coalition splits, stirs turmoil

ISLAMABAD—THE RULING coalition that just a week ago drove US ally Pervez Musharraf from the presidency broke apart, throwing Pakistan into political turmoil just as it faces an increasingly difficult fight against Islamic militants.

The collapse of the fragile alliance Monday threw more pressure on Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of assassinated ex-premier Benazir Bhutto and a one-time elected former pole player who now becomes the front-runner to replace Musharraf.

Fulfilling a threat he made last week, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif pulled his party out of the coalition after a dispute with Zardari over whether to restore the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudry, who was ousted by Musharraf.

Big concerns

There was big concern within Sharif's party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), that such a restoration would lead to the prosecution of Musharraf—and perhaps even Zardari—and thus a fight was in it makes the government's ability to fight militants.

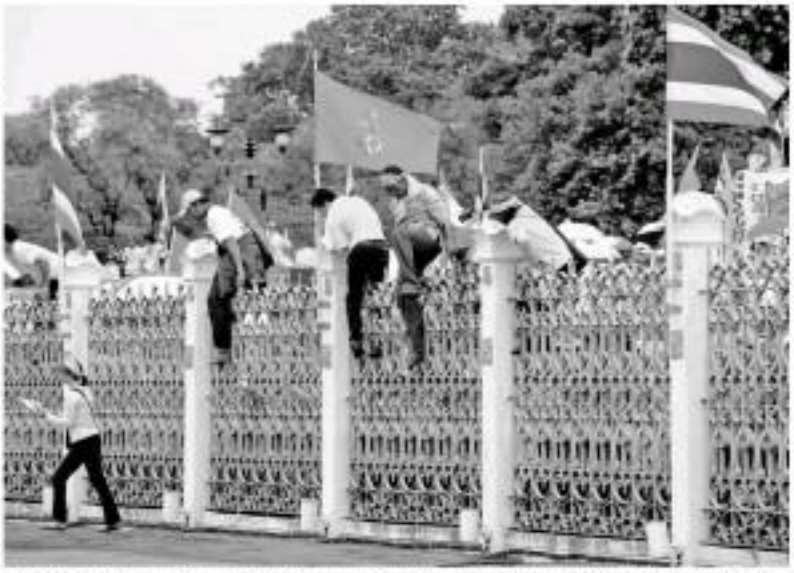
Sharif's withdrawal will cost Zardari and the PPP their majority in parliament. But Zardari is expected to rally support from allies and form a new government with the help of small parties.

And if he does that and wins the presidency, he is in a position to create a more stable government.

Sharif told reporters he would play a "constructive" role in the opposition, but added that he pledged to see a refused judge against Zardari next month.

The government made a strengthened bond to tackle the growing Taliban militancy in Pakistan and said the instability that has plagued the country for the past year.

Zardari's party moved almost immediately to calm US fears that Pakistan's new civilian rulers are paying too little attention to Islamic militants, banning the Pakistani Taliban group that claims to be behind a string of suicide bombings. AP



THOUSANDS of Thai antigovernment protesters climb over a fence as they enter Government House in Bangkok on Tuesday and also seized a state-run TV station to force Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej from office. AFP

Protesters lay siege to Thai TV station in bid to oust premier

BANGKOK—DOZENS OF MASKED, anti-government protesters armed with batons, guns and golf clubs stormed a TV station and briefly shut it down Tuesday, while tens of thousands peacefully laid siege to government ministries.

The massive protests ignited concern of another coup only eight months after a democratically elected prime minister assumed to power, and the country's stock market was down 1.7 percent by mid-morning.

Shut down

However, top military officials assured the public they would not launch a coup, as they did to overthrow to large-corruption powers in 2006.

Members of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) stormed the government-controlled National Broadcasting Services of Thailand or NBT station in the Thai capital early Tuesday, forcing it to shut down for a few hours before police recorded its many 40 protesters for trespassing, the broadcaster said.

A second group of several hundred protesters broke through police lines two hours later, engaging through the NBT offices. They remained inside the television station or building during the station to broadcast from inside headquarters.

Outside the offices, several thousand more members—some waving Thai flags and some wearing yellow shirts honoring the monarchy—peacefully listened to speeches criticizing the government.

As many as 20,000 more PAD supporters were peacefully protesting outside the gates of four government ministries and the main Government House, preventing employees from entering, according to police officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

Protest leaders claimed several hundred thousand people were on the streets of Bangkok.

Long holiday

"We are now controlling most of the key government agencies to prevent them from coming to work," said Somkiet Lisitthaphal, a co-leader of the Alliance. "Today we declare a long, long holiday for the government."

Outside of Bangkok, protesters said they had blocked three main highways leading into the capital.

The protests were the latest effort by the Alliance to force Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej's government from office. The Alliance contends Samak, a crony to former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in the 2006 coup and has sought self-imposed exile in England.

Protesters accuse Samak of trying to amend the constitution to help Thaksin avoid a string of corruption charges against him.

They also accuse the government of failing to aggressively prosecute cases against Thaksin and rebuking calls to extradite him to face justice.

Samak, whose party won national elections last December, has refused to step aside and insisted in late to Monday that the protests would not impact Tuesday's weekly cabinet meeting. AP

CHINESE President Hu Jintao (second, left) and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak (second, right) plant trees as they visit Seoul Forest Park on Tuesday. REUTERS

Beijing, Seoul agree to keep working on North Korea deal

SEOUL—PRESIDENT HU Jintao of China met with South Korea's prime minister Tuesday during a state visit focused on establishing a new strategic partnership between the Asian economic heavyweights as efforts to denuclearize North Korea.

He met South Korean Prime Minister Han Seung-soo to discuss deepening bilateral ties and cooperation on energy and resources, according to Han's office.

He met this morning with leading South Korean businessmen.

The meetings came a day after Hu held his third summit this year with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak. The two leaders pledged to expand cooperation in political, economic and other fields—including North Korea's nuclear disarmament.

"We agreed to make joint efforts to ensure the six-party talks process enters a new phase," Hu said Monday, referring to international talks led by China aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear programs.

Hu, speaking at a news conference with Lee after their summit, called for the "full implementation" of the second phase of the denuclearization process that calls for the disablement and declaration of the North's nuclear facilities.

China, North Korea's key ally and main aid donor, has showed numerous signs of disagreement with the US policy on Pyongyang's nuclear programs. The talks—which also involve the United States, the two Koreas, Russia and Japan—have produced a landmark aid-for-disarmament deal.

In June, North Korea demolished its nuclear reactor's cooling tower and submitted its long-delayed nuclear declaration under the deal. AP

Anwar is confident of victory in bid for Parliament seat

PENANG—EVEN AS RUMOURS of a sex video involving Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim continued to swirl around the country, the PKR de facto leader was confident of victory in the Permatang Pauh by-election.

"I'm not really worried about the video," Anwar told reporters on the campaign trail in Penang. "I'm confident that the people will see through the lies and the slander."

Anwar, whose campaign has been overshadowed by charges he videotaped a male aide, is standing in a seat in Penang that was held by his wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail before she resigned to pave the way for his return to Parliament.

Most commentators say that Anwar will win the vote, but the question is whether he can win by a sufficient margin so as to emerge as the formal leader of the three-party opposition coalition and to mount a challenge to Barisan.

"It's too early to say what is our election the largest we have ever had," Anwar told reporters on the campaign trail in Penang. "I'm confident that I will be launched a decisive victory."

"So, if it just not known to me that the candidate but Anwar versus the Malaysian government, the ruling party and all the excesses you can think of," he said often before the vote.

Hundreds of riot police were stationed outside the polling centres separating rival groups of Anwar and government supporters and two of Anwar's lawyers were arrested as he tried to cross the police line.

Around 4,000 riot police have been deployed in the sleepy constituency to prevent clashes after what has been a divisive and bitter campaign in which Anwar's supporters have alleged vote-buying.

There have been no polls of voting intentions in the election which pits Anwar and his three-party coalition against the United Malays National Organization, the dominant party in a coalition that has ruled Malaysia since independence in 1957.

Reuters

A WOMAN supporter of Sin People's Justice Party (center) wears a mask of Malaysian opposition figurehead Anwar Ibrahim outside a polling station during the by-election in Penang Pauh on Tuesday. AFP

The WORLD

Edited by Lawrence B. Casalmo

Clinton expected to urge followers to back Obama

Action seen to heal the wounds of bruising fight

DENVER—HILLARY CLINTON will grab the spotlight at the Democratic convention on Tuesday (Wednesday morning in Manila) in a speech designed to mend a lingering party rift and rally her frustrated supporters to launch Obama's White House bid.

Obama hopes her high-profile appearance can begin to heal the wounds of a bruising nominating battle and win over die-hard Clinton supporters still angry over his narrow triumph and choice of Joe Biden over her for his running mate.

The prominent drama cast a shadow over Monday's opening day of the convention to crown Obama, 47, a first-term Illinois senator, as the party's leader and presidential candidate in the face of a election battle with Republican John McCain.

Major roles

Obama had tried to ease the tension by giving Clinton, a New York senator, and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, major roles at the convention. Bill Clinton will address the Democrats on Wednesday.

"There are going to be some of Senator Clinton's supporters who we're going to have to work hard to persuade to come to, board. That's not surprising," Obama told reporters on Monday.

"But if you take a look, I think, at this week, I am absolutely convinced that both Hillary Clinton and Bill Clinton understand the stakes," he said.

Clinton will be symbolically nominated for president on Wednesday, although a roll call vote by states may until he can elect and Obama nominated by acclamation under a deal negotiated by the two camps.

Much work

An opinion poll showed how much work remains for Obama. A CNN/Opinion Research Corp. poll said he and McCain were running even at 47 percent—but only 66 percent of Clinton supporters backed Obama, down from 75 percent at the end of June.

Twenty-seven percent of Clinton supporters said they would support McCain, up from 16 percent in late June.

On opening day, convention speakers sought to introduce Obama to Americans and his audience there with his life story as the son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas.

He was raised in Hawaii and Indonesia and worked after college as a community organizer in Chicago.

"He was raised by grandparents who were working class folks just like my parents, and by a single mother who was struggling, glad to pay the bills just like we did," said Obama's wife, Michelle, who closed the opening night session.

The second night of the convention will focus on economic themes and begin to lay out some of Obama's proposals to aid lower- and middle-class voters suffering in a faltering US economy, which polls show is the top issue.

Party unity

Clinton, who is expected to urge her delegates to back Obama, will be introduced by her daughter Chelsea. She got an early start on pushing party unity in an appearance before New York delegates on Monday—although she acknowledged the difficulty in bringing everyone in line.

"We are after all Democrats, so it may take a while," she said. "We're not the hill-to-die party. We are diverse. But make no mistake, we are unified." Reuters

SEN. Hillary Clinton waves to her followers while at the Sheraton Hotel on Monday in Denver AP

THE SUICIDE vest worn by an Iraqi girl who surrendered to the police in Baquba, northeast of Baghdad, on Sunday. REUTERS

Rise in suicide bombings by women worries Iraqis

BAGHDAD—THE ARREST OF a teenage girl with an explosive vest lightly strapped to her body has heightened concern about the rise in suicide bombings by women in Iraq.

The number of female bombers has more than tripled this year, from eight in 2007 to 28 this year, according to US military officials.

On Aug. 14, a woman suicide bomber struck a group of Shiite pilgrims south of Baghdad, killing at least 17 people and wounding scores of others.

Police in Baquba, where the girl was caught Tuesday, said she told them she was terrified with the explosives by female relatives of her husband, whom she married five months ago. One police official alleged that came to the girl's family had links to the al-Qaeda in Iraq terror network.

In displaying the dazed teenager—who says she was born in 1993, which would make her 14 or 15—police wanted to deal another blow to the terror network's brutal reputation, officials said.

Police wanted to "show the desperate level al-Qaeda has reached, with members of one family driving each other to death," said Brigadier Hadi Issi, head of the provincial council in Baquba. AP

Texas students' first-day jitters: Are the teachers in? Are they carrying guns?

HARROLD, TEXAS—KICKING with normal first-day jitters and excitement, students in this tiny district started school Monday wondering which teachers might be toting firearms.

"It was kind of awkward knowing that some teachers were carrying guns," said Kelsey Linn, 17, a senior. "I don't feel like they should be, 'cause we already have locked doors and cameras. But I didn't feel threatened by it."

Several parents said they had no idea that employees of the 6-12 school were allowed to carry concealed guns on campus until recent publicity about the school board's policy, approved quietly last fall. They said they were upset that the rural community near the Oklahoma border had not been able to give input.

While some parents said they felt their children were safer, others opposed the plan, which appears to be the first of its kind nationwide.

"As far as I'm concerned, teachers were trained to educate my children...not carry a gun. Even police officers need years of training in hostage situations," said Traci Welling, whose three children are among the 110 students in the red-brick Harrold school. "I don't want my child looking over her shoulder wondering who's carrying a gun."

But Harrold Superintendent David Thweatt said the board approved the policy by an October vote meeting that had been publicized. He said the decision was made after nearly two years of researching the best school security options in the school, which is just off a busy highway and 30 minutes away from the sheriff's office.

"When you endow guns in a certain area, the only people who follow that are law-abiding citizens, and everybody else ignores it," Thweatt said.

The superintendent said some of the school's 30 employees are carrying weapons, but he wouldn't say how many. When pressed further, he first said that revealing that number might jeopardize school security. He then added that he considered it to be personnel information and not a matter of public record. AP

Israel frees 198 more Palestinians

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK—Israel freed nearly 200 Palestinian prisoners in a hero's welcome to the West Bank on Monday, seeking to bolster President Mahmoud Abbas as US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice begins a five-nation mission.

Making her seventh visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories this year in a bid to secure a peace agreement by December, Rice welcomed the release as "something that removes a lot to the Palestinians."

She said the offer aimed for a peace deal before President George W. Bush leaves office in January has played down chances of any partial accord in time for the September UN General Assembly.

"It's extremely important not to keep making forward progress," Rice told reporters on the flower-fed trip.

"We continue to have the same goal which is to reach agreement by the end of the year," Rice said.

She added later Washington was not considering the deals to "bridge the gaps," and acknowledged it would be hard to strike a deal this year. Reuters

STANDOFF IN GEORGIA

Russia recognizes rebel areas

MOSCOW—RUSSIAN PRESident Dmitry Medvedev announced Tuesday he had signed a decree under which Russia formally recognizes the rebel Georgian provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states.

"I have signed decrees on the recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia," Medvedev said in a pre-recorded address broadcast on national television.

"Russia calls on other states to follow its example," said Medvedev, standing at a podium flanked by two Russian flags.

The Russian president said his decision was made "taking into account the freely expressed will of the Ossetian and Abkhaz people" and was in accordance with the United Nations Charter and a 1970 declaration on international law.

Medvedev also cited the Helsinki Final Act and other "fundamental" international documents as justification for his decision.

"This is not an easy choice, but it is the only way to save the lives of people," Medvedev said.

GROUNDED soldiers bring mobile military equipment together in a military base, which was occupied by Russian forces and evacuated last Saturday, in western Georgia, on Monday. AFP/VI

He said Russia had demonstrated "restraint and patience" in its relationship with Georgia and had repeatedly sought to resolve the dispute over the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia through negotiations.

"But any moderate proposals to the Georgian side to reach an agreement with Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the renunciation of force remained unanswered.

"Unfortunately, they were ignored also by Nato and the UN," Medvedev said.

He attacked the government of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, saying that on the night of Aug. 8 Tbilisi "made its choice." He was referring to Georgia's attack on the separatist forces in South Ossetia.

"Saakashvili chose genocide to achieve his political goals," Medvedev said. AFP

SPORTS

HARRY Tokatlian's surprising ko defeat to Ghana's Moses Plange (left) ranks among the top setbacks the Philippine delegation suffered in the Beijing Olympics. —AP

Olympic champs triumph /A30

Bayron shoots 68 in Putra Cup A/29

Olympic blame hunt kicks off

Chiz: Control NSA aid

By Cid Cabasinggan Jr.

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO yesterday filed Senate Resolution 583, which aims to probe the causes of the country's medal-dry campaign in the recent Beijing Olympics, a move that is expected to kick off the blame game that traditionally follows poor Philippine performances in big overseas meets.

Sen. Pia Cayetano is expected to follow suit. The former national volleyball player has said she will also file a resolution that will look into the country's National Sports Associations and how they are run.

SANTIAGO

CICLISMO

Invited Rep. Monico Puentevella, on the other hand, will deliver a privilege speech today to persuade congressmen to force the head of the Philippine Sports Commission to explain the dismal performance of the gaming contingent's prolific three-wheeled army on Page A2B1.

"It is a shame that in 84 years Ed Philippine Olympic participation[s] not even one athlete was able to bring home a gold medal," said Santiago.

The country's participation in Beijing failed to net a single medal. Adds Santiago, not having won a gold medal in Olympic history, the Philippines trembled in mediocrity in the Summer Games in three editions since the 2000 Sydney Games.

The country's last medal was the silver won by boxer Mansueto "Onyok" Velasco during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

In Beijing, the Philippines won a handful of medals in weeks, including a gold from Nilo

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GILAS's Jovilo of Sta. Beralde challenges the defense of San Beda's jovanie Villanueva during their first-round NCAA collision. — RENATO SORIA

San Beda seeks revenge vs Benilde; SSC-JRU up

By Cedelf P. Tapao

ITS INITIAL VICTORY TAKEN AWAY BY a decision in the boardroom, San Beda could serve up the perfect revenge for St. Benilde today: End the Blazers' Final Four meddlesome.

With the second round of the NCAA season basketball tournament heading into the home stretch, the Lions and Blazers face off at 4 p.m. in a clash as important as the earlier game between San Sebastian College and San Beda University at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City.

"It's over and done with and we've moved on from that loss," said Lions head coach Frankie Lim, referring to the NCAA Management Committee decision to overturn the Lions' 73-34 first-round victory because Jiam Jiam donned the wrong number in time.

"But every game matters for us now. We must relocate our last three games to stay on top."

Lim remains wary of the Blazers, who are fresh from a 66-56 conquest of another Final Four contender, Mapúa, last week.

"We just have to be careful with Benilde. They are coming off a big win and their morale is very high," he added.

The Lions have won their last two games, including a 77-59 triumph over the Blazers themselves, to gain a piece of the lead with JRU and Letran.

Running mate with a 7-4 card, Jiam Jiam Soliz, the only minor undefeated in the second round, could forge a two-way tie for third with a record of 10-3? 9-4 in the end JRU.

Represented by the stellar play of big men Jayvee Sollentrave and veteran Jun Gray and Jireh Delgado, the Stags have rushed up to victims above a 6-6 start.

"Jiam Jiam Soliz is the only one [whom] we have to watch in the second [Stags] play are due for a loss," said JRU coach Aries Pumaranda.

Meanwhile, Philippine Christian University's physical Brian Heruela and Lemuel Mariano have been told as to not the emotional cry of the season for disciplinary measures. Archbishop coach Jun Dalisay told the Inquirer yesterday.

"They were not able to play the way they were supposed to [being the veterans in the team]," said Dalisay, whose Dolphins are already out of contention with a 2-8 card.

The decision to suspend Belga and Mariano, members of PCU's 2003 champion, no name, who have already applied for next week's PBA, is supported by the school administration, Dalisay said.

Belga, member of the Barbecue Grains-Air Team that topped the 2007 Foodchow Asian Games gold medal, played his last game for PCU in a 66-57 loss to San Sebastian last Aug. 16. Belga was named a consensus composition for NBA big SSC's Gilbert Rodriguez to the same game.

SPORTSWATCH

Gaddi averts Philippine shutout in Asian Karting

JET MAURICE D. CRISTOBAL GADDI averted a shutout for the Philippine Sports-PAP Karting Team by winning the Intercontinental of the 2008 Asian Karting Open Championship at the Sentul International Circuit in Bogor, Indonesia, recently.

The nine-year-old Gaddi pulled ahead early en route to his third straight win in the Cadet 60 class. He finished the 14-lap final race in 14 minutes over 53.978 seconds to win by 0.020 seconds over fellow countryman Dave Ignacio who finished 0.106 2:2.

Another Filipino, Sabastian Gacasan, clinched a third finishing 0.8 seconds behind Gaddi.

SJC Rambulan round 3

THE ONLY GOOD NIGHT BEFORE DONGNOLLES in Metro Manila today interrupts as San Juan Colleges via the thirty-sixth installments of SJC Rambulan Open's. ring derby.

Among the early qualifiers with three wins each were Dante Magbanua (upper 171), Ramon Tanny Ebon and Ramil Pineda Bonifacio (Welterweight), Mayor Edito Morales (lightweight), Alberto Santos (MVS), Danny Dang (MBBA – PCP) and Mayor Joel Cariaso (CPB). Eric Marcia (senior).

A grand purse prize of P1 million awaits the champions for an entry fee of P1,000.

Coolers and boasters may still join this last two rounds on Aug. 30 and Sept. 1," said all managers Ramon Tino and Rodrigo Checo.

Roligan derby Sept. 2

THE NUMBER OF CONFIRMED ENTRIES continues to rise as the NU Throwdown E-sing derby at the Roligan Mega Cockpit draws nearer.

Slated on Sept. 2, 4 and 7, the event will be hosted by Danny "Lyonheart" Romero via with Ina Calapan Boogaloo and Theodore Ford Ferrous as backers. A guaranteed prize of P1 million awaits the winners.

Screening and weighing will be held today at Roligan office from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Stage with "Showdown" weighmen will also be accepted in the Day Festival is sing derby on Sept. 28, 29 and 30. Ford Roby Lopez put up a prize of P1.5 million for monthly fee of P5,000.

So Joins Vietnam Open

AFTER A JOB WELL DONE IN TURKEY, Grandmaster Shirley Jo is off to another tournament in Vietnam.

Board of auditor last year, the 14-year-old Jo has been ranked to lead a four-man Philippine team to the first Dragon Capital Vietnam Open chess championship which starts today at the F & T Hotel in Vung Tau, Vietnam.

Shirley Jo's last gold-medal finish in the recent World Under-16 Chess Olympiad in Mersin, Turkey, he will be one of the players to watch in the nine-round tourney serving as the sixth leg of the ASEAN Chess Grand Prix.

Jo is ranked fourth in Vung Tau with his Elo of 2077, behind Georgian GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2645) and Vietnamese GMs Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son Le (2579) and Quang Liem (2577).

Three other Filipinos – International Masters Rolando Nolte, Julio Catalino Sadorra and Richard Bitoon – are competing in the event to keep up a good record in the Vietnamese Chess Federation and the ASEAN Chess Confederation.

WELL? Jo shares his gold-medal win's National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Prospero "Boyet" Pichay (left) and secretary-general Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino at the PSPA. — RENATO SORIA

Puentevella wants PSC's Pagcor cut restored

By Jane Meneses

PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC CHIEF OF MISSION Monico Puentevella will deliver a privilege speech before Congress today to urge for colleagues to amend a section of Republic Act no. 6847 that law that created the Philippine Sports Commission.

The Barefoot solon will try to persuade his fellow congressmen to help the PSC get back its five-percent share from the annual gross earnings of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (Pagcor).

"We will make the law very clear. We're going to what can need to redemption. We cannot stop," said Puentevella.

And whether they (Pagcor) agree that they are right or wrong is not the issue anymore," the Philippine Olympic Committee first vice-president added.

PUENTEVELLA

Puentevella was particularly hit on Section 26 of the 1997, which was passed in 1998. Under the law, Pagcor is mandated to provide the PSC five percent of its gross income, which could translate to around P1 billion a year.

"What's happening is we go to the process of what's left after the franchise tax is removed and the 5% process of the gross goes to the national treasury," said the BP-weightlifting chief.

"Under this computation, the PSC only gets half of its original share as I mean it must [Section 26] clarified or amended as soon as possible."

Puentevella said a consultative meeting is scheduled on Sept. 4 among representatives of the PSC, PSC, Pagcor, Department of Budget, Department of Education, Department of Interior and Local Government and other stakeholders in Philippine sports.

"We will try to formulate a law or cross the PSC administration after the Asian games. [Pagcor will get the same budget under the law is amended," he said.

Should we reward RP record breakers?

FIRST OF ALL, I HAVE TO MAKE IT clear that I have absolutely nothing against the athletes or sure to the just-ended 29th Olympiad in Beijing, but I am enough against those data-mined sports officials who proposed to give cash rewards to the athletes who broke Philippine records at the Games.

In my opinion, giving monetary incentives to RP record breakers is not only a waste of people's money, but also most unfair to the other athletes like boxer Harry Tolentino and taekwondo-ist Marie Antoinette Rivero and Tolentino Go, whose events are not measurable either by time or distance. More importantly, this proposal to reward these continual record-breakers is totally absurd, a no-brainer to say the least, because Philippine records are funny many years behind the times.

Instead, the money earmarked for these record-breakers could be spent wisely for the athletes' medicine and scientific training—especially the newly-discovered ones—and for the remaining veterans—to prepare them for the 2012 London Games and other future major international competitions.

CLEAN LIVING

Hyacinth B. Deyto

In a post-game TV interview after pinning 2008 in a field of 08 in Beijing long jump bet Henry Dagnol said, "I benefited from my brief training stint in the United States. However, I still need more modern training just like the one I received in America."

Breaking Philippine records is not something to curse about. Instead, sports officials should encourage the athletes to acquire the higher goals such as equaling at least—if not surpassing—the Asian Games standards.

As former Sen. Robert Jaworski once said, "We should follow Olympic's way if we want to become No. 1 in the region." Chinese athletes have always dominated past Asian Games and pulled an even bigger surprise in the Olympics which concluded on Sunday by winning the gold medal count, defending powerful nations like US, Russia, Britain, Australia and Germany.

Said Jaworski, "When the Chinese closed the door to the outside world, they developed feverishly to improve their sports programs. With the help of their 800+ national sports associations, the Chinese government took the lead in identifying talents and training them to become world-class athletes. Now, China is an acknowledged world super power not only in sports, but in other aspects as well."

Meanwhile, Philippine Sports Commission chair Pilipinas "Butch" Ramirez said he was ready to step down following the Olympic debacle and urged officials of the PSAs, who were also to blame for the medal drought, to do the same.

"We take all the blame because we have all the money, but then living the disbursing agency we have oversight powers over these NSAs because we are funding them," stressed Ramirez.

Officials of the Philippine Olympic Committee, headed by former Tulsa Rep. Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, are also to blame for how they are the ones who approved the list of members to the Beijing Games.

DOUBTING OF CHAMPIONS

There stays after the Beijing Olympic Games, talkfest continues to surround the gold-medal victory of the Chinese gymnastics team amid issues with allegations that China entered several under-aged gymnasts.

The Chinese gymnastics, in particular double gold-medal winner He Kexin, won the gold, but one could still hear ugly rumors that the Chinese birthed under 16 minors. Their controlled victory was instantly tainted.

As a result, the International Olympic Committee asked the International Gymnastics Federation to investigate the nagging questions about the ages of some members of the Chinese team. In gymnastics, the athletes only officially become 16 and above in competition. Quotes claimed that several Chinese gymnasts were only 14 or even younger when they the won the gold.

As of Friday last week, the IOC said there was no proof the Chinese cheated. The gymnastics federation also responsible said that the documents, including the passports submitted by Chinese officials, showed that gymnasts were above 16, making eligible to compete.

Olympic blame hunt kicks off…

From page A17

Wang, but the sport is not part of the regular Olympic calendar and the results of the demonstration event do not count in the final standings.

"The poor performances of our athletes in the Olympics is not due to bad practice but the failure lack of resources for the development of a comprehensive program in the area of sports," said Santiago who noted that sports "should not only be enjoyed but also taken seriously."

Sought by the lawmen for comment, PSC chair William Ramirez said he will cooperate the Senate inquiry.

"I will be glad to answer all the questions [before the PSC] says," Ramirez said.

Santiago wants the senate to look into the budgets of PSC and POC, the duplication process of NSAs and how they allocate their budget for their athletes and the controversies haunting the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Sen. Pimentel "Chiz" Escudero, meanwhile, applied the rules on the Blame game, saying "there is no one to point out [to] [any] one point more."

"The olympics are over and done with, we need to move on, but we have to learn from the mistakes we've committed," added Escudero, who wants a more proactive solution to the sporting debacle.

Expenses is urging a return to the "Project Gintong Alay" days. The popular sports development program, run by Eduardo Cojuangco, ushered in a golden age for Philippine sports and produced the likes of Asian sprint queen Lydia de Vega and Elma Muros.

"I have so much faith in Michael Phelps, Ian Thorpe, Alicia Sequenza [...]," said Cojuangco, whose star is a national player was rewarded by the program."

Kreta, a nephew of then President Ferdinand Marcos, implemented a program well funded by the government and run by by professional sports managers.

Escudero, on the other hand, is reaching for the PSC to have greater control over funding for NSAs.

Escudero, echoing a bold plan by PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez, said NSAs should get their share of government funding based on merit.

"The national sports use the PSC is keeping records of NSA performance, including NSAs which performed poorly not only in the Olympics but in other competitions as well," Escudero said.

"These records would provide a jump-off point for the sum of forward support system which we are trying to propose," he added.

"The PSC should re-evaluate its spending. While it could not limit its support to just a few, a big consideration of its funding should be spent on sports equivalences with real chances of winning in the Olympics."

Ramirez, in a separate hearing Postponed, is to move to bring back the PSC's share of the pie that from the government of the Pagcor.

Clearly, though, the country's top lawmakers want a close look at how NSAs are being run.

"There are just too many politicians running the NSAs and that is where the problems," Cayetano told the lawmen.

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri suggested that the sports authorities focus on a few sports programs where the Philippines could stand such as boxing, basketball, tennis and taekwondo.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said: "Our dismissing Olympic performance must be viewed just because we are a third world country. Kenya, Nigeria, Jamaica are not first world countries but got medals."

48TH PUTRA CUP

Bayron shoots 68, lifts RP to 2nd spot

By Mosang R. Castillo

SINGAPORE—AFTER JUST 18 HOLES in his very first round of duty for the Philippines, Bayron Bayron made history the easy way and successfully stepped out of the shadows of his older brothers.

The rookie clocked a sparkling 8-under-par 68 to lead the Philippines to a 206 tally, just three shots off a hot Singapore crew at the end of the 48th Putra Cup.

On a day when even spoonbend Benhard Asano struggled at the Bukit course of the Singapore Island Country Club here, the 20-year-old Bulloo was there to do what older brother Jay was counted upon to do so many times in the several years—lead the team out.

"I felt no pressure at all and just played my game," the 20-year-old Bayron, a former Gerdenberg swimmer in the Bel Aire club and reigning DBL Anatomia champion, told The Inquirer in Filipino.

"Maybe it just so happened that my game clicked today, but I expect the others to do the same (Asano and Abdul) to count them heavily in the succeeding days," said Bayron, who was discovered by the National Caddies Open program some years ago.

Asano needed to sip a 3-wood from 250 yards on the par-5, 570-yard 13th hole to set up a chip-in right from around the green and nail a 70, with young Stefan Andrei charming into a 71 to make up the Philippines' card which proved impressive enough.

Josel Abalos, the other veteran of the team after Asano, couldn't solve the green of the two-listed, up-and-down Jansen Hotel condition and limped home with a 75 that was thrown away.

After opening up with a birdie and pitching up three more shots in the next 14 holes, Bayron was working on a four-under card going into the closing three before missing the 16th green and three-putting the 17th for bogeys.

Ace Glen Tee Huang, the lanky 21-year-old trained to be the future of Singapore golf, and Jonathan Leong both returned 68s and, together with Quirex Quek's 70, gave the hosts an impressive opening effort of 206.

Singapore, which won this tournament two years ago when the Philippines and Thailand skipped the event to Papua New Guinea, got its lead in the final two holes with its top three players shooting a combined two-under after Quek finished birdie-birdie.

"We're in a good position, considering how hot Singapore started," said national coach Bong Lopez after watching Asano take a nine-footer for birdie on the 16. "Three strokes behind is still a close battle ahead.

"The important thing is that we were able to go under par on the first day," he added. "It gives the players the confidence and it tells a lot on the abilities of this team."

Even Philippines is considered one of the favorites in the eight-nation meet and this heavily group is tallied from two qualifying stages, is given an even chance of ending a 22-year title drought for the country that once hosted it over Southeast Asia's official team championship.

"Running second this early is good," said former Putra Cup ace Tommy Marcos, who won the Singapore Am on the course two decades ago and who made the trip to direct the Filipinos. "I would rather have us chasing than being chased.

"Young players have the tendency of holding up while holding the lead early," he explained. "And that's an added burden for Bryn (Bryan) to carry."

Defending champion Thailand, which has two members of the team that won this event in Laguna last year, was another three shots behind the Filipinos with a 211 built around the trio of Itaruksara brothers.

Apichart Pacthok accomplished a 74 and Tanes Suddhabali a 73 for the area two That scores even as reigning Southeast Asian Games gold medalist Pipatpong Intararuk did not count with a 74.

Myanmar got a 69 from Aung Win, a 71 from Naj Myint and 74 from two Moe Win for a 214 and fourth spot, right off the pace and on up on Indonesia, which got Tikhaja Budi Aldo, Tedik and Ivy Hosein.

The Philippine Team in the second Leo's Day—the junior version of this event—struggled big time and found itself trailing Singapore by 12 strokes in fourth spot.

Kristian Espeed, the hot new junior world champion, led the Filipinos with a 73 and Ichbal Carlos and Ace Arbole added 76s for the Philippines' 223. Cheryl Daisy's 79 did not count.

Josiah Sua matched par, Johnson Ivin scrambled a 72 and Clint Cheng Cheng a 74 for the hosts' pre-meeting 217 aggregate that was good for a one-stroke lead over Thailand.

The Thais got a 72 from Thitipon Sheepyenkeng and 73s from Nanal Sinsuwan, Kanchit Jaiyaphan and Chaidol Jaiyaphan.

Malaysia was in third, another five strokes behind at 222.

FLYING Bayron Bayron powers

Scuaa sweep puts UNP in Champs regional finals

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN PHILIPpines cracked Marians Maurice State University, 88-69, in the finals to top the five-game sweep of the Schools Collegiate Universities Athletic Association (Scuaa) Visas last Aug. 23.

The Vigan City-based UNP were all the rage in the Scuaa Divisionals (Juniors) round before repeating over MMSU of Batac, Ilocos Norte in the one-game finals to bag the South Luzon 8 Tarlac Cup.

UNP and MMSU thus qualified for the Region 1 championship of the Season Championships League 2008 Philippine Collegiate Championship. They will join it up with the top teams from the Region-Benguet Educational Athletic League finals for the regional championship.

Dangerous Ilocos University placed third with a 3-2 record. Bocos Say Polytechnic State University and Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University wound up with identical 1-3 slates.

The Region 1 champion will move on to the zonal championship where it will be joined by the Region 2 winner, NCAA's finals player South BCAA's runner-up and two wildcard teams.

The top two zonal performers will make the PBSA Flying 7 "Sweet 16"/16 slot dated in November in Manila.

The nationwide series has drawn 215 collegiate teams, according to Championships Georgie Abalos Operations.

Those teams are playing in 27 conference leagues including under Metro Manila tournaments SAAC NCAA, Mentor and Gaas and Cebu City's Cesafi.

A total prize of P2 million worth of scholarships and other grants await the winners in the regional, zonal and national championships.

The national champion will get $500,000 in grants and will represent the country in the 2009 Universiade Games in Serbia.

The southeast Games will gather top school teams and athletes worldwide.

For more details about the biggest collegiate basketball event of the year, log on to www.CollegiateChampionship.com.ph.

—Rovilou S. Andrin

Lyceum, UM boost Naascu semis hopes

FIVE-TIME CHAMPION UNIVERSITY of Manila and newcomer Lyceum of Subic Bay sustained separate rivals to boost their semifinal chances in the 6th National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (Naascu) at the SM gym in Manila.

Onofre Magpoc, a 6-foot-3 junior forward, finished with a game-high 20 points and 11 rebounds to lead UM over semifinals co-leader New Era University, 76-69.

The Hawks of coach Francis Padrigano coasted to their fourth win in six matches.

Lyceum shocked defending champion UE Colleges, 87-84, in the other match, to tie UM and San Sebastian College-Cavite at 4-2.

The Hawks, who are seeking their first title since the retirement of longtime mentor Aric Velarmino, also got 14 points from Reuven Bahinal while Christian Sumagaysay contributed 11 markers.

New Era dropped to second place at 5-2 in the entry's history champion's MBA Computer University.

St. Clare College Crescens drove the entry with a 5-1 mark.

Nineteth Sitjo registered for the Hunters with 25 points, followed by Elmer Jocson with 12, Christian Dionisio with 11 and Jovelle Quidoc with 10.

In the junior division, Inter-scholastic Amas, 87-84, to improve to 5-2. SSC-Cavite slipped Centro Escolar University, 76-68, and University of Makati stunned UM, 89-77, in overtime.

Marist posts 6th straight SBP victory

RALPH ALVIN LEGASPI SCORED 17 as coach Madel Sobrio led Jose P. Rizal University 89-69 victory over Mapua Cardinals, 52-49, in the Mike-sponsored Small Basketball Philippines-Pasarello basketball tournament at the Series gym over the weekend.

Mel Andrei Swimmer in the last 10 seconds of regulation fueled the victories, for the Stevenson steelhead produced the Master's first win in three outings to snatch it their sixth straight win and the lead in Group B of SBP.

Notre Dame dropped to 3-1 despite the heroics of regular MENT Centre standout Lorenzo Villanueva, whose 13 points went for naught.

In Girls Green, Hillcrest (5-1) defeated Lourdes School of Quezon City, 11-41, 45-26, in the other Group B match.

In Group A matches, it was redemption Monday (3-0) over Jose Rizal(6) Integrated School (1-5), 47-38, and Xavier School (5-1) over Lourdes Mandaluyong (4-2), 90-78.

In the Pasarello Street, San Beda College-A (6-1) outdued Notre Dame of Greater Manila (1-5), 85-79, Ateneo de Lady of Lourdes School (5-3) dismissed Lourdes QC (0-6), 69-32, University of Santo Tomas (5-3) routed San Sebastian College (1-4), 80-26, and Xavier School (5-3) blasted De La Salle Zobel (5-2), 48-33.

In Pasarello-B, it was San Beda-B (4-1) over Golden Bonne Christian School (3-3), 115-24, and School of St. Anthony (2-3) over Don Bosco Technical Institute of Makati (3-1), 17-15.

BARELY MADE IT Chicago White Sox's Jose Abreu (left) skids into third base past Baltimore Orioles third baseman Melvin Mora on a ground ball hit by Alexei Ramirez in the ninth inning. The White Sox won, 4-1.

S'woods, Tagaytay rule WGAP

WITH THE TITLE IN THE BAG AT EARLY AT the second round, Manila Southwoods went on to dethrone Del Monte and stay the Division championship of the 36th Lexmoor golf tournament held at the Riverbed Golf and Country Club over the weekend.

Tagaytay Highlands and Alabang Country Club topped the Rudy and Dixie divisions, respectively, to share top honors with Southwoods in the three-day event staged annually by the Women's Golf Association of the Philippines (WGAP).

Regine de Guzman, a rookie in the veteran-laced team, improved for the Gardenbased squad with 74 points, an even-par 72 equivalent at the Riviera layout. She was supported by Lora Roberts (75), Rochie Abica (80), Bee Gonzales (80) and Gene Ong (80).

Tagaytay Highlands made 186-366 in the end to stave Avon Ambassador runway over the host team's 186-3646 for the Ruby class.

Pat Domingo (40), Sarah Imperial (38), Estelle Gimenez (39), Holly Ann (39), and Karen Bustamante (36) contributed to the closing 186 for Highlands' aggregate 366 points.

MEMBERS of the Manila Southwoods team display their trophies.

SPORTS

US OPEN

Olympic champs triumph

CZECH Vaidisova, daughter of former NBA star Rik Vaidisova, gets the boot from Jelena Jankovic. —Reuters

NEW YORK—OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS Rafael Nadal and Elena Dementieva showed their mettle at the US Open, overcoming early challenges to win Monday in the start of what's expected to be a wide-open tournament.

Former champs Lindsay Davenport and Svetlana Kuznetsova also opened with straight-set victories. Many of the stars like to hurry through the first round...it takes seven wins for the title, and any rust is welcome.

Playing for the first time as the top-ranked player on the ATP tour, Nadal seemed his very first shot with against No. 130 Bjorn Phau. The Wimbledon and French Open champ was two points from dropping the first set when he tangled and, despite needing to bandage a nasty blister, won, 7-6 (11), 6-3, 7-6 (5).

"I didn't play with normal intensity," Nadal said. "Probably I'm a little bit tired."

Asked whether he was more fatigued mentally, physically or emotionally from Beijing, he said, "I think it is a little bit of everything."

Nadal got a stiffer test from the German qualifier than many anticipated, and should his head serve the end of a match that lasted nearly 3 hours.

No. 9 seed Janko Blake had to play past midnight to survive a five-set match against 19-year-old Indian American Donald Young. With the help of two key calls overturned on challenges in the last two games, Blake won, 6-1, 3-6, 6-1, 4-6, 6-4.

Dementieva looked like gold while sailing the final four games of her 6-2, 6-3 second-round win over Alexandra Dulgheru, 6-4, 7-5. The fifth-seeded Russian was glad to win quickly and give her mind and body a break.

"It's very hard not to think about the Olympic Games," Dementieva said. "Very difficult to refocus. I mean, all my thinking is there in Beijing."

Top-seeded Ivana Chakovacka was the top player to lose, beaten by Daniela Hantuchova, 1-6, 6-2, 6-3, in a rematch of Roanoke.

Roger Federer, bidding for his fifth straight US Open title, was scheduled to begin Tuesday, as were No. 1 Ana Ivanovic and the Williams sisters.

The final Grand Slam event of the season figured to be a scramble on both sides.

Nadal seems like the current favorite, yet has never gone beyond the quarterfinals in five previous tries at Flushing Meadows. The 22-year-old Spaniard took a while to find his rhythm against Phau, whose spirited play made him a crowd favorite.

Then at Arthur Ashe Stadium, often quiet during early daytime sessions, cheered when Phau closed for a shot, and Nadal never set his back and chased a return.

The tennis there is over most cycling now that 2007 champion Justine Henin has retired and Maria Sharapova is out with an injured shoulder.

Six different women have won the US Open in the last seven years, and Dementieva is seeking her first major championship. AP

NAVEL Nadal celebrates during his first round victory over Bjorn Phau of Germany —AFP

China gains overcome heartaches

BEIJING—FIGURE LIU HANGTA OLYMPIA withdrawal and a no-hum performance by basketball star Yao Ming were few points for China at the Beijing Olympics.

They hardly mattered.

Such disappointments were commonplace against the hosts' all-time but count of 100 medals—51 gold—an amount that sprawled across the Olympic program into sports where China hadn't before dominated. Only the United States had more medals with 110, and its 36 golds were a distant second to China's tally.

China won gold medals in 16 of 28 Olympic disciplines, up from 14 four years ago in Athens and 12 at the 2000 Sydney Games.

These gains were the result of China's eight-year-old program targeting overlooked sports—known as "Project 119" for the number of unexploited medals up for grabs. The program delivered, backed by hundreds of millions of dollars in state funding, supreme foreign expertise, home-field advantage, and a desire to establish China as a dominant sporting power for years to come.

"Even in events where gold wasn't won, we've raised our level enormously" said Liu Peng, the head of China's government sports administration. "State and popular support, economic development and social stability have all been huge factors."

Among the most eye-catching breakthroughs were boxer Zhang Min's gold medal in the women's middleweight class; Zhang Jiaoqiao's rocket-fuel women's archery gold; and a silver medal for the women's field hockey team.

Sailing, rowing, beach volleyball and triathlon also offered new medals, with the groundwork laid for greater success at the 2012 Games in London. AP

Beijing combatants battle jet lag at Grand Slam

DEPENDIENA —AFP

NEW YORK—THE KINGS OF THE Olympics are not the only ones in common for Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and the Williams sisters.

Chances are those tennis champions also share dark circles under their eyes, courtesy of the jaw-dropping Beijing Games and cross-continent flying.

Fresh off a gold medal in men's singles at the Olympics—an big accomplishment—Nadal began his quest for his first US Open title on Monday as the newly minted No. 1 player in the world.

"It was tough, because two weeks ago I were from Cincinnati to Beijing, 12 hours, and went 12 more hours (to New York)," this year's French Open and Wimbledon champion said before facing Bjorn Phau in the first round. "It's tough, but I don't want to think about that."

No, he has more important issues to worry about, such as solving Federer as a fourthrower as he finally dethroned his rival on Wimbledon's grass last month. Nadal is seeking his third straight Grand Slam title, though he's never passed the US Open quarterfinals.

Federer fanned out in singles at Beijing, but captured gold for Switzerland in doubles before heading to New York to try to defend his US Open title for a fourth straight year.

Of the 64 men who played singles in Beijing, 31 are also in the US Open field. Likewise, 55 women are doing the doubles duo routes along every four years.

"I'm just going to try to recover from a schedule of traveling we've had," said Federer, a 12-time Grand Slam champion.

While Nadal had his first match on Monday, Federer and Olympic women's doubles champions Venus and Serena Williams weren't scheduled to begin their US Open singles play until Tuesday. Federer and Venus are the headliners under the lights late Tuesday but Serena is shared for the day session.

"Still, I'm still trying to get over the jet lag," Serena said. "Venus seems like she isn't having a problem, but I don't handle jet lag as well as she does."

Venus did, however, lose track of the days as she prepared to shoot for her third US Open title.

"I've got here Thursday. I really don't know what day it is anymore," she said on Saturday. "I thought today was Friday, but I'm here at the right time."

Elena Dementieva, the Open's No. 1 seed and the gold medal winner in women's singles in Beijing, was first on Arthur Ashe Stadium court on Monday and rebounded. Alexandra Dulgheru, 6-4, 7-5, in about 90 minutes.

Dementieva stopped home in Moscow following her Olympic win over countrywoman Dinara Safina on Sunday. After showing off her medal and celebrating with her family for one day—including a visit to her tennis club—Dementieva was back on the move. She arrived in New York on Wednesday. AP

Beijing makes plans for Games venues' future

BEIJING—PUBLIC OLYMPIANS RAN, swam and slept. Chinese organizers see pop concerts, a public pool, football games and luxury apartments.

Authorities are scrambling to make sure the $1,000-seat Bird's Nest stadium and other venues are put to good use after the Olympics and September's Paralympics. They want to avoid the fate of other Olympic hosts that were left with empty, debt-burdened facilities.

The NBA and private developers have been signed up to use stadiums and arenas. The Water Cube swimming center, due to become a public pool, raised money by licensing its name for a bottled water brand. The Bird's Nest is raising bids from companies for naming rights.

"We believe that post-games usefulness is a key factor in how these venues will be used going forward," Du Wei, vice president of the Beijing Olympic Economy Research Association, a group linked to the Beijing organizers, told reporters. "The management companies will inevitably spend more than up for public use."

Still, the steel others may be crucial take down for the Bird's Nest and other venues to pay for themselves.

Beijing built 12 government-and-night temporary new venues and refurbished 11 others at a cost of $1.9 billion, according to the city government.

The Bird's Nest will be the highest profile test case for the city's ability to make them financially viable.

It has the advantage that it is the first big, modern stadium in a city where the many venue for rock concerts and sports has been the 2nth Workers Stadium, a 36,000-seat bulk built in 1959. But the new facility's huge size and perennially high rent has could put it beyond the reach of many events.

The stadium's deputy general manager, Zhang Hongli, declined to give financial details or information on planned events. But he told the newspaper China Business News it could take 30 years for the Bird's Nest to repay its $220 million cost. Zhang said it needs at least $10 million in annual revenue to cover maintenance and debt payments.

Beijing is relying in part on a two-part strategy of finding state companies to share the cost of public facilities.

CITIC Group, a government-owned investment company, put up 48 percent of the money to build the Bird's Nest and the CITIC-owned Beijing Guoan football club will make the stadium its home field.

Zhang, the stadium official, declined to discuss naming rights. But China Business News said a naming an arena companies $10 million, it said they include one Chinese bidders, though something a foreign brand name to a national symbol that appears on China's 10-yuan note might be judged politically unacceptable.

The stadium has raised $14.3 million by selling sponsorships to companies including American conglomerate 3M Corp. and German drug company Bayer AG. Their names appear on suite and other facilities.

The Water Cube was paid for by donations from ethnic Chinese abroad, making it cheaper to convert to public use. But in a city where the average income per person is $4,000 a year, it's unclear any ticket prices will be kept low, which leaves less for upkeep of its pool and its futuristic bubble-wrap exterior.

"If we rely only on swimming pool tickets, we certainly will lose money," Feng Wei, a deputy manager of the government company that owns the pool, said in comments on the Beijing organizers' website. "So we will have other products to guarantee the operation in the long run."

The Water Cube raised money by licensing its name for use on swimsuits and can bottled water made from Canadian icebergs.

Beijing began clearing the venues' layout ahead of time as it was awarded the games in 2001.

Athlete housing was designed from the start as luxury apartments, with swimming pools, tennis courts, coffee shops and shopping. Chinese media say units sold out ahead of the games for prices of $2,000-$4,000 per square meter, high even for Beijing's booming real estate market.

Some venues were built as additions to universities. AP

TOURISTS roll around the Bird's Nest stadium in Beijing, China, during one of the athletic events held at the venue. Chinese authorities are making sure Olympic arenas won't turn into "white elephants," like other Olympic venues in the past by planning for their future use. —AFP

IN THIS ISSUE
- Bakers urge flour millers to hold off price hike /B3
- Gov't eyes budget of P1.43T for 2009 /B6

BUSINESS

John Paul O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mercene

IN THIS ISSUE
- PRCI cancels share swap deal with JTH Davies /B2
- Biz Buzz /B5

Peso weakens to 45.995 to a dollar

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 45.995 = $ 1

STOCK MARKET

Stocks close lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.6... percent lower yesterday as investors took to the sidelines ahead of the release of numbers to go north this for the first ... months in June, dealers said. The composite index shed 72.52 points to 3,830.05. The all-share index fell 13.61 points to 1,820.22.

EPG/B2 #1

6-month trade gap swells to $3.93B

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY SKIDDED TO THE 46 mark against the dollar for the first time in 11 months as the country's huge first semester trade deficit stoked fears of a sharper economic slowdown alongside a weak sentiment across offshore markets.

The country's import bill turned up 32.7 percent in June from a year ago, outpacing the 6.6-percent year-on-year growth in export earnings during the same period, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

The trade deficit ballooned to $3.93 billion, more than four times bigger than the $909-million deficit a year ago.

The lengthening trade gap in the first half of the year is fueling fears that the country's current account deficit — the difference between exports and imports of goods and services — will widen to a record this year.

The local currency opened at 46.75 and hit an intra-day low of 46, its weakest against the greenback since touching 46.32 on Sept. 18 last year. It closed yesterday at 45.995 from Monday's 45.85 as dollar demand for foreign-currency debt payments and importers' needs as well as weak sentiment across the region contributed to sell-off pressures.

Other traders said the peso would have fallen further if not for the BSP's unloading of dollars near the 46.00 level.

"We are mindful of how the relative strength of the dollar versus the peso could impact prices of imported input to production, including oil and other sensitive commodity prices," said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr.

Jonathan Ravelas, chief strategist at Banco de Oro Universal Bank, said the peso's steep fall was in reaction to the sharp ...

PESO/B2

PRCI cancels share swap deal with JTH Davies

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

PHILIPPINE RACING CLUB INC. (PRCI) is withdrawing from a conventional share-for-asset swap deal that would have exchanged PRCI's 21 hectare property at the Santa Ana Park in Makati City for shares in Singapore-listing firm JTH Davies.

Reasons: The transaction would entail some P450 million in various taxes.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, both JTH and PRCI agreed to "disengage effective immediately from the deal of transfer with subscription agreement" executed jointly by both parties and executed last July 7.

In a separate statement, PRCI said it disclosed to the Securities and Exchange Commission last Aug. 20 that its decision not to push through with the deal stems from a notice from the Bureau of Internal Revenue dated July 13, imposing a value-added tax on the share swap deal.

On June 12, 2007, PRCI obtained a favorable ruling from the BIR confirming that under Sec. 40 (c) (2) of the National Internal Revenue Code, the transfer of Santa Ana Park property to JTH in exchange for JTH shares was not subject to income tax, capital gains tax, expanded withholding tax, VAT, donor tax and documentary stamps.

The swap deal, which was approved by the PRCI board in May 2007, would have paved the way for the redevelopment of the race track property into a commercial office and residential area.

PRCI's executive committee approved the swapping of the company's Makati property covering 212,088 square meters or 21 hectares with 795.42 million shares of JTH Davies Holdings.

PRCI will end up owning 91.25 percent of JTH Davies after completing the swap.

Minority shareholders of PRCI opposed to the deal obtained a temporary restraining order from the Makati Regional Trial Court last July 30, 2007, or a day before the transaction was to have been discussed at the company's stockholders' meeting. Subsequently, the Court of Appeals affirmed the RTC ruling.

Last April, the Supreme Court ruled on Edmundo against the CA and RTC orders, paving the way for PRCI board to order up the matter with stockholders in a meeting last June 18.

Stockholders representing 75 percent of PRCI's shares approved the swap subject to a favorable ruling from the BIR that the deal was exempted from taxes. Both PRCI and JTH proceeded to sign a deed of exchange last July 7.

On Aug. 14, however, PRCI said it received a copy of a letter from the Department of Finance to the BIR informing its revenue unit that notwithstanding the BIR's ruling, the Bureau of Internal Revenue is still considering a request to seek the revocation of the tax exemption. PRCI received on Aug. 15 the BIR's letter that a VAT would be imposed on the swap deal.

One world

Ron Nathan

. . .

Forget the day-to-day movements of Wall Street. They are soulless and meaningless and one should look at the big picture. The whole world is going into recession, not just the United States. They have their special problems with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which have plummeted more than 70 percent this year and stand at just a few dollars per share penny. This problem is not going to go away as concern grows about a government bailout, which could cost the taxpayers between $50 billion and $100 billion. Fannie and Freddie are crucial to the housing market because they collectively own or back about $5.2 trillion in mortgages, more than half the nation's debt.

Allowing them to go bankrupt will precipitate a catastrophic collapse in the housing market, which could last for the years and cause the worst recession since 1929. Ahead of an election, this is not going to happen but the situation is complicated by the fact that a vast amount of insurance has been written with a face value of $2 trillion.

If the Treasury puts up the money for a huge amount of preferred stocks, then the likelihood of a dividend ever being paid out on the common stock is remote and the stock will become worthless. Fannie and Freddie are currently offering three- and six-month bills to side shows now Lehman Brothers is looking at a further credit-million-dollar loss in the third quarter ending this month and even Goldman Sachs is looking at a larger write-down. All the financial companies are vulnerable and will remain so. As of late the Lehman Brothers by a forum bank has been derided.

Now for the more important bigger picture. Europe is going into decline with the United Kingdom leading the way. Its housing market is grossly inflated and is going to fall faster than the United States. Next is no-fascist and Freddie, so only the government could intervene and they will be facing an election they will surely lose. The United Kingdom also faces unemployment and inflation at 3 percent and the pound is at a two-year low against the dollar. Germany, the biggest European economy, saw its economy contract by 2 percent in the second quarter while France, Italy and probably Spain also slipped slightly. So 2009 is going to be much worse than 2008, said the chief economist at an Italian bank. There goes one of America's trade export markets.

What about Japan, the world's second largest economy? The Bank of Japan said it has become more pessimistic about the economy and kept rates at its subnormal 0.5 percent. "Economic growth has become sluggish against the backdrops of high energy and commodity prices plus weaker growth in exports. Wages fell 0.4 percent and employment slipped for the first time in years as Japan is still stuck in deflation, which is worse than inflation. "The economy isn't likely to recover until 2008," said the Bank of Japan. Its latest GDP figure is minus 0.6 percent.

China remains the only growth engine trying to support the rest of the world and is now the third or fourth largest economy that even China is slowing down. Last February, industrial production was growing at a blistering rate of 23 percent and inflation was running at 6.7 percent, twice the target rate. Despite the snowstorms and earthquake, production has been rising every month but at a slower rate. In July, industrial output was growing at 18.5 percent and the economy is slowing to a more sustainable level 9-10 percent from 12 percent. On the good side, inflation had declined to 6.5 percent.

However, the slowing is affecting all other countries. For example, much of ore shipments to China in July plunged 9% percent as lower prices of refined nickel, down from $53,000 a ton to $38,000, and energy shortages cut production of coiled pig iron. Mill lines of some of Interbe Inc making at the ports as the unloaded because Datan rain closed the vessel lines for hours to save energy. It may well be that now the Olympics have ended factories will start up again. Slower growth would bring under control current shortages. It would also put pressure on commodity prices including oil. This, in turn, would affect Australia, Brazil, Canada, Russia and other suppliers. The whole world is facing a global slowdown next year and beyond. This is not just my opinion but also that of the IMF, which is predicting that the global economy will slow from 5 percent in 2007 to 4.1 percent in 2008.

Peso ... From page B1

rise in import expenditures that, in turn, was due to the surge in oil prices over a year ago.

After 46-$1, Hawkins said the most barrier to the dollar's moneydowning against the peso would be at 46.50.

The peso and most other Asian currencies were also pulled down by the dollar's sustained recovery against the euro, in turn, ordered by fears over a slowdown in the various of the subdued European market.

"It's due to risk aversion. There's no good news," said Export Bank treasurer Benjo Arcinas.

Stocks ... From page B1

Ninety-eight issuers declined, 36 advanced and 36 were unchanged. Turnover reached P1.4 billion.

"Coming from a long weekend, this recession is widely expected, and we may see more losses for the rest of the week," Ernest Tan of Regina Capital told Dow Jones Newswires.

AFP

Atlas signs copper supply deal

By Amy R. Remo

ATLAS CONSOLIDATED MINING and Development Corp. yesterday said its subsidiary, Carmen Copper Corp., has signed an offtake agreement with Swiss-based trading house MRI Trading AG.

"Carmen Copper has agreed to sell the first 60,000 dry metric tons of copper concentrate from the Toledo copper mine in Toledo City, Cebu, to MRI, which expects that the agreed returns will be delivered by June 2008," Atlas told the Philippine Stock Exchange.

The Toledo copper mine is operated by the Atlas subsidiary and a financing partner from Singapore, Taiwanese Asian Diversified Opportunity Portfolio (Cayman), which holds a 35-percent stake in Carmen Copper.

Commercial production of copper concentrates from the Toledo mine is expected to start in the month following the inbuilt-in-commissioning facilities and equipment for actual operations.

The rehabilitation, which started in September last year, was 95-percent complete as of June 30, the Securities and Exchange Commission reported.

Atlas added that the offtake agreement could be extended.

Under the terms of the offtake contract, MRI will provide a hedge on copper prices for the first 50,000 MT of concentrates.

"MRI has likewise agreed to pay for concentrates delivered under the contract on the Average Spot in Toledo City," the disclosure said.

Bakers urge flour millers to hold off price hike

By Rascel W. Domingo

BAKERS ARE URGING LOCAL FLOUR millers to hold off a planned price increase this week, which could trigger another hike in the cost of bread.

The bakery said that if the plan of the Philippine Flour Millers Association pushes through, the price of a 25-kilogram bag of flour would rise by P60 to P970, which would also affect the cost of another staple substitute for rice—instant noodles.

According to the Philippine Federation of Bakers Associations (PFBA), the looming increases would push up the price of pan de sal by 25 centavos each and that of a loaf of bread by up to P1.50.

Currently, a small pan de sal costs P2.50. Each while a regular-sized piece costs P3.50. A loaf of bread is priced at around P46.

Simplicio Umali Jr., president of the Philippine Baking Industry Group, said in an interview that the international price of wheat—from which flour is made—has gone down from $284 a bushel in May to $11.

"We appeal to the millers to undertake current prices, should losses and supply occurs these times reduce prices further go down to November until re-occurs in global supply," Umali said.

Umali explained that the price of wheat was expected to go down further to the next five months due with the coming harvest.

Differing groups here trend from the three that sees the brands Gaston Square, La Gran de Flores, Cindy's Gardens, Alle's Bakeshop, Bakeshop, Mabee Park Good, Dundee Grand, Fortune Bakeshop, Bounds Donuts, The French Bakes, Tiffany Mr. Donut and BFC.

Airline rewards light packers

By Rica T. Olchondra

CEBU PACIFIC is giving passengers traveling without check-in bags a P500 discount on their fare in a bid to ease congestion.

The airline also announced its free baggage allowance for all bookings made starting Sept. 2 from 20 kilograms to 15 kg is passengers, except for the Boracay (Caticlan) flights, where the baggage allowance will stay at 10 kg to passengers.

The "No Line" discount will apply to domestic and international bookings beginning Sept. 2. Cebu Pacific will also be offering a 20-percent discount for prepayment of excess baggage through its website and ticket offices.

LOAN PROBLEMS?
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CITISECONLINE

'Taipanic' sibling rivalry

THERE IS A BREWING BOY BIsetween this tai
brothers. According to our sources, this prominent Filipino-Chinese industrialist was so displeased with his ailing son that he dropped him of
over the empire's vast treasury.

This was said to be the apple of
the sibling, who has long stayed in the shadow of his taipan brother, moved to pounce on the banishment of his son. What irked the taipan was that the brother's businesses were directly competing with the interest of the conglomerate.

The boy is still not on
whether this is a petty quarrel or a heart-breaking breakaway.

Doris C. Dumlao

Credit card woe [w/bio]

MANY holders of credit cards issued by various banks got the shock of their lives when they received their latest monthly bills with amazingly large purchases posted.

The owners of the cards were flooded with customer complaints or disillusioned inquiries regarding these billings.

As it turned out, the problem was caused by a system foul-up in Banco de Oro Universal Bank, whose card-swiping terminals have become unresponsive to department stores, boutiques and restaurants.

According to an e-mail sent by one bank to its cardholders, all point transactions swiped on BDO terminals from Aug. 16 to 18 were booked as US dollar transactions.

"A purchase of P1,000 swiped on a BDO terminal, for example, posted as $1,000 [about P43,000]," the bank explained. "This was an error that affected all MasterCard cards (e.g. BPI, Citibank, HSBC) with transactions that were swiped on BDO terminals on the dates mentioned."

A client who spent P25,000 for a hotel stay was flabbergasted to have received a bill of over P1 million, despite his lower credit limit. Jaclee J. Lucas

Speaking of credit...

MANY bankers and businessmen are scrutinizing their lawmakers' decision to override the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas from playing any significant role in the final revision of the Credit Information System Act (CIA) that will be submitted to President Macapagal-Arroyo for enactment.

One, a bill that lays the groundwork for the creation of a centralized credit information bureau, aims to lower borrowing costs—be it a corporate loan or a credit card debt—by implementing risk-rate monitoring system for credit standing. This means that borrowers with good track records will pay lower interest rates while delinquent ones will have to pay more or be limited from borrowing altogether.

The BSP, chastened by the fall and had been pushing it forward since seven years or so ago, but it was left out of the loop at the house stretch by our influential congressmen who has been on the investment bank's case... for running scared and acting various methods. One of his reasons was that "the BSP has been mismanaging its affairs."

Instead, the control of the new credit information bureau has been handed over to a reluctant Securities and Exchange Commission, whose understaffed and overworked offices are already groaning under the weight of their present assignments.

"I never asked for this," said SEC Chair Fe Barin when asked about it. "I was just told to accept it." Jaclee J. Lucas

MB-devil's advocate

IF THE TEMPERATURE often rises within the BSP offices despite air-conditioning, it's probably because of the private broker Monetary Board member who has a penchant for questioning and finding flaws in various actions proposed by the policy-making body's approval, mostly those involving regulatory measures for the banking system.

The board member usually ends up either dissenting or voting against those resolutions even if those measures will inevitably be carried by the majority anyway.

The MB member, who is one of the rare lawyers in the group, always makes sure that opposing arguments are in black and white. Depending on who's talking, this MB member is either a whimsical fault-finder or a judicious overseer. Doris C. Dumlao

Speaking of MB members...

THE SHARING community is breathing a sigh of relief over reports that Raul A. Bonoan will be reappointed by President Arroyo to the policy-making Monetary Board of the BSP.

Bonoan's first six-year term ended last month, and Malacañang took its time in deciding who to appoint in the last vacant slot in the seven-member body that sets interest rates and banking supervision policies. Many bankers and businessmen—fretting about the prospect of yet another Arroyo political ally being appointed to the MB—discreetly made their objections known to the Palace while, to no avail, listened.

This is bound to please most members, except a vulture engaged in hacking who lobbied for someone else for the slot.

The reappointment of Bonoan has only been "approved in principle" and his papers have yet to be signed. We all know how things can still change in situations like these. Dandee L. Locsin

Off-guard Andaya

BUDGET Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. had a rare (and bizarre) case of the security SOP that the cautious man must go through when entering office buildings during last week's press conference on the government's budget deficit at the Land Bank building in Manila.

Because it was only recently that government economic managers have started holding such press briefings at the Land Bank building (due to the long-running power failure at the Department of Finance offices), lobby security guards were not yet familiar with the faces of the key personalities attending the events. Either that or it was Andaya's youthful look that made the guards fail to recognize the budget secretary.

Upon entering the building, Andaya was asked to sign the guest book, which he readily complied with. Without even a peek at the log, the guard insisted on getting the visitor's ID.

Andaya emptied his pockets in a frantic search for an ID (which is usually the least of his concerns) and apparently found none. Exasperated, the good secretary considered just walking out. Fortunately, the reception desk finally got the advisory that the budget chief was in the vicinity. Only then was he promptly ushered upon the conference room. Doris C. Dumlao

Biz Buzz
By the way!

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500,000 – 999,999	4.000	4.000	4.125	4.500
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5.0MM and up	5.000	5.000	5.125	5.500

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BUSINESS

Gov't eyes budget of ₱1.43T for 2009

By Doris C. Dumlao

Revenues are expected to rise by 11% to P1.393T next year

THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING A cash budget of P1.433 trillion for next year—up by 8.3 percent from this year's budget, and a bit higher than the P1.415-trillion obligation budget to be submitted to Congress, based on Department of Finance documents.

The slight difference between the cash budget and the obligation budget that Congress is asked to approve/enact is attributed to some items taken out of expenditure accounting.

The Department of Budget and Management said it would ask Congress to earmark P1.433 trillion in obligation budget for next year, higher by 15.4 percent than the appropriation for this year.

The revenue targets, however, are the same under the cash and obligation budgets.

Revenues are projected to rise by about 11 percent to P1.393 trillion next year from this year's P1.250-trillion.

Of total revenues that are expected to account for 16 percent of gross domestic product next year, the Bureau of Internal Revenue is projected to collect P988.5 billion, while the Bureau of Customs is seen to contribute P386.1 billion.

Non-tax revenues are projected to reach P119.4 billion. Of this amount, privatization proceeds would account for P1.2 billion.

In terms of expenditures, interest payments are projected to rise to P303.7 billion, or 3.5 percent of GDP, from this year's budget of P293.1 billion.

Capital outlays are seen at P386.4 billion from P288.0 billion this year.

Of total outlays for next year, infrastructure spending would account for P221 billion, or about 2.5 percent of GDP.

The budget for next year assumed that the domestic economy would grow by at least 6.1 percent.

The budget deficit is expected at P40 billion.

Small power users get first crack at refund

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSUMERS HAVING THE LOWEST electricity bills among customers of the Lopez-led Manila Electric Co. will be the first to receive their meter deposit refund.

Meralco first vice president for customer retail services Roberto Almanzor said those on the bottom rung in terms of monthly kilowatt-hour (kWh) consumption would be eligible to claim their rebates by November, with the number of eligible customers to be ramped up each month.

These customers represented the lifeline rates, or those consuming 100 kWh or less electricity a month. However, not all lifeline customers would be given their refund in November, Almanzor said. The recipients of the refund in this group would roll take several months to complete.

He said 75 percent of the entire five-year refund period would be devoted to residential customers alone, relegating large commercial and industrial clients to the last stretch of the refund process.

On the average, customers falling under the lowest consumption bracket would receive a refund of around P800 each, which they could opt to claim in cash or check or have Meralco credit on future bills or charged against arrears.

In all, Meralco would have to refund P2.6 billion worth of meter deposits, including interest.

According to the Energy Regulatory Commission guidelines, distribution utilities such as Meralco should be able to complete the refund process by January 2014.

US think tank expects BSP to hike key rates

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS IS expected to jack up its key interest rates by 75 to 100 basis points in the months ahead as concerns over effects of high inflation, economists said.

For its policy rate setting this Thursday, the market has already factored in a 25-basis-point hike, raising the overnight borrowing rate to 8 percent.

"With persistent volatilities in global commodities markets, monetary officials are unlikely to stand on their hawkish stance as yet, and this is indeed what they have lately been signaling," New York-based think tank Global Source said in a commentary dated Aug. 22.

The BSP has so far raised its key interest rates by a total 75 basis points over the last two months. Consumer prices rose by an average of 12.2 percent in July, the fastest rate seen in 17 years, bringing the country's seven-month inflation average to 9.3 percent.

Global Source sees the BSP raising its key interest rates by 75 to 100 basis points for the rest of the year.

Edward Teather, an economist at UBS Investment Research, said the BSP and the Bank of Thailand would likely jack up its interest rates by 25 basis points this week.

By year's end, UBS expects the BSP's overnight borrowing rate to reach 8.5 percent—75 basis points higher than the current rate. It also expects the rate to further rise to 9 percent next year. Doris C. Dumlao

Coco products shipments fell 40.8% in May

By Amy R. Remo

EXPORTS OF PHILIPPINE COCONUT PRODucts plunged by 40.8 percent in May to 95,257 metric tons in copra terms from its year-ago level of 160,950 MT.

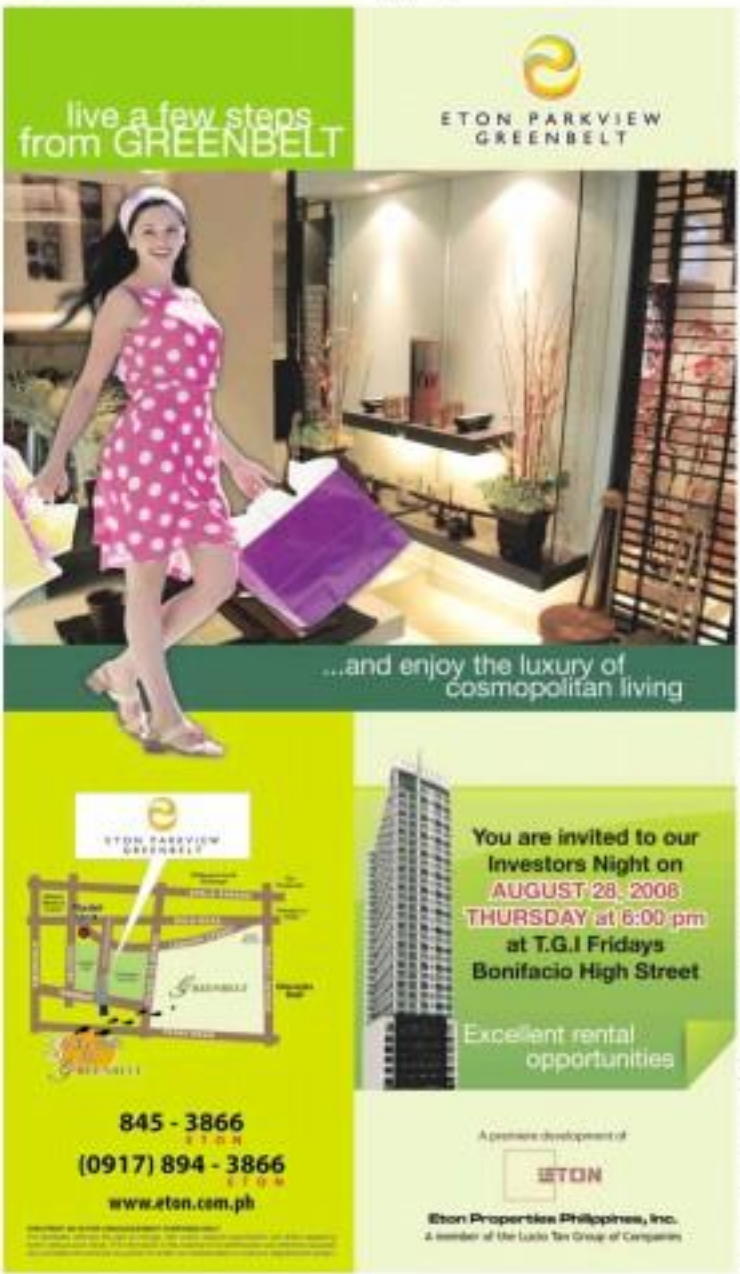
Data from the Philippine Coconut Authority showed that the sharp drop in coconut oil shipments during the month had been responsible for the sharp decline in total coco exports.

Despite the decline, PCA said that production receipts meanwhile rose slightly by 2.4 percent during the month to 856.9 million from last year's 894.6 million due mainly to the substantial rise in border prices.

With the May shipments, total exports for the first five months of the year reached 788,700 MT in copra terms, up by a hefty 10.8 percent from last year's 385,474 MT.

Corresponding revenue for the five-month period was $631 million, nearly double from that of the previous year's $331 million.

In May alone, the PCA said revenue oil shipments declined sharply year-on-year by 46.3 percent to 46,330 MT from 85,577 MT.



MOTORING
Edited by Jose D. Mangaoang

THE ENTIRE 2nd generation of the first-shot Honda Jazz hatch lineup uses i-vtec engine.

Motor show crowd drawn to 'pocket-sized' autos

By Tess R. Salazar

PRESIDENT MACAPAgal-Arroyo, all with her 4' 11" presence, certainly set the tone for the Philippine International Motor Show. Small is big, and the crowd that visited the four-day-long show seemed to agree as most of their flocked to the mini cars sections.

Despite plummeting world oil prices, PIMS visitors flocked like ants to the totally colored pint-sized cars, obviously showing that their primary consideration for buying cars still is modest-to-low fuel consumption.

Well, that plus a host of other reasons.

Tiny but versatile-spaced

Sales executive John Dennis C. Marquez of Honda said he agrees most of his cute-answering potential buyers queried for "tiny but versatile-spaced vehicles," which the new Honda Jazz hatchback on display seemed to answer quite thoroughly, as the vehicle won by far the most inspected of the Honda lineup during the show.

Among the most bills loaded of the mini cars, the Jazz boasts of the i-VTEC engine even for the 1.3-liter variant (deemed of the previous i-DSI), the 5-speed automatic transmission, SRS airbags, G-LOX body structure, antilock brake system (ABS) with electronic brake-force distribution and brake assist, its brake system carries 4-wheel disc brakes for increased braking efficiency. The rear seats could be folded flat or up for an expanded 384-liter capacity.

The 1.3 variant even has a race-inspired paddle-shifter.

The Jazz, however, demands a bit more from its buyers in terms of pricing. For the 1.3-liter S-MT, buyers will be out back P797,000. For the 1.3-liter S-AT, P747,000, and for the 1.5-liter V-AT, P797,000.

For those with a little less of a budget on hand, Alpha Philmotors Sales Corp. offers the the Picanto, whose 1.1-liter DLC manual transmission version goes for just P600,000 and the DLS automatic at P630,000. Sales agent Jun S. Diaz confirmed that the Picanto-Optimo did generate the most inquiries, followed by Kia's CEED-powered family carriers Carens and Carnival.

The same trend occurred at the Hyundai booths, where the new hatchbacks 1.3-liter GLS and 1.5-liter DSL stirred the hearings with the ultra-roomy Getz's sedan, form to go head-to-head with Kia Picanto, the GLS 1.3 Auto GLS means of transmission with airbag is priced at P608,000 while the automatic

MOTOR BIZ

TOYOTA HYBRID. Toyota's A-BAT is a mock-up hybrid concept vehicle that is also a compact version of a pickup truck.

KIA'S FUEL CELL TECH. The Kia Sportage SUV demonstrator is a fuel-cell electric vehicle that runs on electricity produced from hydrogen.

Drive green: Helpful hints to save on fuel

THE PROHIBITIVE COST OF petroleum products has made fuel efficiency a buzzword in today's motoring environment. The 13 participating global auto brands at the 2nd Philippine International Motor Show (PIMS) at the World Trade Center in Pasay City clearly heeded this trend by offering new models that are fuel-efficient and improve consumers' mileage.

While the vehicle itself matters when it comes to fuel efficiency, the biggest factor remains to be the person behind the wheel, said Charlie Ona, technical instructor at Toyota Motors Corp., in a seminar on fuel efficiency at the motor show. Ultimately, he said the motorist is still the most crucial part of the fuel-efficiency equation.

One way to improve fuel take

One of the quickest ways to improve fuel take is by simply removing excess cargo and unnecessary weight when driving. Simply put, the heavier the load, the harder the engine has to work and the more fuel it consumes.

Motorists can also temper their use of the vehicle's air-conditioning unit, especially during a prolonged traffic jam. Ona said a vehicle consumes 10 to 20 percent more oil when stuck in traffic than while in motion. Simply breaking the uneven settings can also make a difference. Some people have the impulsive habit of jacking up their stereo settings to the maximum level than just settle for a comfortable level.

Even the way a vehicle starts and accelerates affects how much fuel is consumed. A hard, sudden step on the accelerator will race the motor in order to reach fuel-thirst just a slow and gentle press. According to Ona, a motorist's fuel consumption could easily double just by making this mistake on the accelerator.

Watchful habit

Finally, revving the vehicle before killing the engine is not only unnecessary but also harmful. A single revolutions enough gas to run 50 minutes. This may not seem much, but piled up, this can amount to pretty significant figures.

Makers of the new crop of vehicles have heeded the call to these points.

Fuel-efficient

Among the fuel-efficient concept cars unveiled at the recently held Philippine International Motor Show are Mitsubishi Motors' iMiEV (Mitsubishi Innovative Electric Vehicle), a zero-emission hatchback that runs on electricity; Toyota's A-BAT, a truck-cut-by-half concept vehicle that has a four-cylinder gas engine but works on both electricity and gas; and the Kia Sportage SUV demonstrator, a fuel-cell electric vehicle that runs on electricity produced from hydrogen.

A number, however, can only do much.

Aside from a motorist's behavior behind the wheel, there are also external factors that affect a vehicle's fuel efficiency, such as road conditions and weather. Fuel consumption during the summer season, for one, goes up as motorists are likelier to look up their air-conditioning units to cope with the heat.

Despite all the technological advances that make newer engines and models as fuel-efficient as possible, motorists still largely determine how much gas (and money) they will save in the long run, Ona said.

First mass US crossing for hydrogen vehicles completed

LOS ANGELES—FOUR HYDROGEN fuel cell cars from nine automakers completed a 11-day cross-country trip last weekend, in the first such mass US crossing for vehicles powered by a zero-emission technology still in its infancy.

At first go, the event, which ran from Portland, Maine, to the Los Angeles Coliseum, probably would not qualify for the record books. There were stretches without hydrogen fueling stations where the vehicles were carried on flatbed trucks, five stops in Fort Bella, Missouri, to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

More fueling stations

But does one of the goals of the "Hydrogen Road Test '08" was to demonstrate the need to build more fueling stations if the cleaner technology is to develop, said Brad Bradshaw, administrator for research and innovative technology for the US Department of Transportation.

There are about 60 hydrogen stations in the United States, and only two are open to the public without prior arrangement.

The industry- and government-sponsored tour stopped in 32 cities in 18 states. Backers included auto hydrogen proponents, the Fuel Cell and Hydrogen, which hope to become household names if hydrogen becomes cheaper to manufacture.

Carbon-free Democratic executive director of major tour supporter California Fuel Cell Partnership, said fueling stations will develop first in big cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Washington, DC.

Hunger for clean cars

"There's a lot of curiosity about these vehicles," Dunwoody said more than 6,000 people in Los Angeles on Saturday "as we got to Allentown, Pennsylvania, people lined up and cheered." The partnership also funds is based near California's capital, Sacramento, and funded by public and private funds.

"There's a hunger out there for clean, safe vehicles," Bradshaw said. "The romance collide everywhere we went was 'Where do we get these cars?'"

For most people the answer is nowhere soon. Honda Motor Co. has begun leasing about 200 FXC Clarity fuel-cell autos in Southern California and General Motors Corp. is testing about 100 Equinox SUVs on the road.

But those deployments, as well as the autos on the road now, are experimental, since the technology is not ready for showroom. Carmakers have spent billions on their development in hopes of capitalizing on a public desire to buy cleaner cars and a US push to reduce its dependence on foreign oil.

The United States consumes about a quarter of the world's oil, and imports 70 percent of its crude. Cars and trucks consume 44 percent of oil used in the country and contribute about a fifth of the carbon dioxide emissions. GHs make up nearly 90 percent of US greenhouse gas emissions.

Even in a fuel-cars economy, automakers will only sell about 2 million electric vehicles powered by hydrogen fuel cells by 2020, a study by the National Research Council found.

Cars on the test route from Honda, GM, Toyota Motor Corp., Ford Motor Co., BMW AG, Daimler AG, Hyundai Motor Co., Nissan Motor Co., and Volkswagen AG.

Hydrogen fueling

Linde and Air Products showed off their hydrogen-fueling machines to the public and at times refueled the autos.

The idea by the tour originated with Bradshaw when he watched a Kia Rondo documentary, "Hercules Drive," at the same time that he was reading a biography of Dwight Eisenhower.

The Eisenhower biography mentioned the future president's cross-country trip as a young man, when he noticed long unwieldy military convoy roads. When he was president in the 1950s, Eisenhower started the US interstate highway system.

Rondo documented the 1903 drive of Horatio Nelson Jackson who, on a bet, crossed the country in a 20-horsepower Winton car hoping to be the first to make the trip in an automobile. His journey from San Francisco to New York took 64 days. Reuters

Motor show crowd drawn to 'pocket-sized' autos

From page B4-1

transmission version, which has no airbag, is priced at P538,000. The 1.0 1.4-liter DI-D manual is priced at P1.048 million while the CVVT automatic transmission is priced at P998,000.

Privacy warrior

Across the venue, as Hyundai's i10 showed its wares for the comfort seats with the Picanto, Kia Motors seemed to be busy gathering casual support, with the K-Car concept (cutesy screamboxy design language reminiscent of the Soul) and its primary vehicle a yellow Picanto from Colombian auto Car showing evasion in fuel-efficiency rating of 20.8 km per litre based on the Department of Energy's 2008

LOOKS like the Picanto will be defending its pint-size title, and give competition much more to worry about.

LOTS OF TECH, LONG WAIT. Mitsubishi's electric mini-car i-MiEV will rebut your appetite, but the make course will surely be turned in 200 8.

HYUNDAI'S new sister—the i10—has cleverly designed center console-mounted shift lever for easy maneuvering, an instrument panel with green LED type meters, and an audio unit at the top of the center fascia for brain-minded cars.

General Motors sales agent Bernd Bringelius and sales sales consultant James Montero said the next number of inquiries at their booth was for the new Spark 1.0, priced at P495,000, followed by the 1.2-liter four hatchback (P550,000) and Aveo 1.4-sedan and 1.5 hatchback models. GM also showed the Optra CB3 (cute powered gas-powered) 1.6-liter 103 valve four cylinder sold in Thailand, Malaysia, Russia and Europe.

Electric mini-car

An electric mini-car of Mitsubishi drew in the crowds, too. The i-MiEV (Mitsubishi Innovative Electric Vehicle) can run up to 160 km on a single charge. It is powered by lithium ion batteries, a compact motor, with three-way battery charging system. Buyers, however, have to wait until 2010 to get to owners.

World Rx. A mini-sedan Toyota was on the mini-car frenzy, too. The Vitz and its electric hybrid simulator drew in the crowds.

Ford also let on display its ethanol-capable Focus and the Everest, as well as the Mazda variants at a separate Mazda booth.

Luxury cars

Showing that not all cars is might at the show, luxury cars such as those from Audi, Porsche, Volvo and BMW were also on display.

Lexus' pedestrianed cars were also on display, courtesy of Toyota Car Philippines. Wholesaler service providers and accessories were offered such services and LPG installation and conversion kits.

The "entertainment" was unofficially provided by Isuzu, which featured an Alterra installed with a humongous 32-inch LCD TV. In the way Filipinos seem to be entertained, at least, big is still big.

Driving in the wet is wonderful

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT MAN IS THE ultimate equalizer. Two skill behind the wheel becomes evident when the road ahead is slick with an ever present film of water, grime and oil. Even at the highest levels of motor sport, there are just some drivers than excel in the wet when traction is dramatically low and sometimes nonexistent. While others are slowing down and picking their way through puddles of icky filth and traces of receding water, we ebby how continue at a clip remarkably faster than the rest.

Everyday commuters could learn a thing or two from the wet weather icons of professional driving. Because the fundamentals are the same, car control at the limit of traction always starts with trying to drive safely when it rains.

Healthy amount of caution

The most important factor when driving in the least friendly of conditions is a healthy measure of overconfidence that you'd know it by watching WRC (World Rueing Circus) giants Loeb and Latvala as they practically fly over the special stages of a rain-drenched rally, but those drivers are fast because they have decided to slow down. Sounds contradictory, doesn't it?

By pushing their vehicles a little less, the amount of corrections they have to execute is minimized. Slightly slowing allows those drivers to keep their cars pointed in the right direction as much as possible. In a driving discipline where precious fractional enumerations is lost when having to correct a slide or by slowing to avoid going to the shrubbery, small things add up in time saved. This exercise ensures produces smoothing wet rally wins.

The ability to finesse a vehicle is an almost second nature, where the weight of the vehicle is not consuming the traction of any single tire, is a very important skill in the wet. Also lessening when your car will start to slip into an uncontrolled situation is key. Knowing how your vehicle will behave when confronted with slippery conditions is equally vital. Ultimately, driving judiciously to the rain ensures a steady pace and keeps one from becoming one with the scenery.

Critical skill

Reading the road in front of you is also a critical skill. Seeing wet weather conditions identifying patches of standing water is the easy part. Determining what's under all that water, well, that's near impossible. Picking a clean path through large puddles of standing water is ideal but there are just some times that we cannot avoid driving over the wokmoors.

The best thing to do would be to slow the vehicle down and complete one's deceleration before your tires hit the standing water. Once you know that driving over the water is inevitable, there is a need to get off the brakes. Continuing to apply pressure to the brake pedal while entering a puddle with an unknown depth will almost always result in disaster. Hydroplaning will often happen and the car will almost always go sideways.

What does the trick

Unless you know what to do in that case, spinning out and going off the road is a large possibility. Whether your car is front-, rear- or all-wheel drive, sudden inputs on the steering wheel and the pedals should be avoided. These in most cases, when executed by a novice driver will result in a spin, or worse.

Simply lifting gently off the accelerator often does the trick. Brake modulation may be needed to move difficult situations. Please realize that recovery from a hydroplaning situation at speed is near impossible for most drivers who haven't had any sort of formal training.

Driving a car in adverse weather is one the most ideal of situations but there is no need to stay indoors every time it rains buckets of water. A good driving attitude—being both cautious and alert—can ensure a safe drive.

Knowing your vehicle's behavior in slippery situations and keeping your driving skills honed can be additional insurance against the ill of the traffic accidents just waiting to happen during the rainy season. As the saying goes the skies are gray and shoes are falling on already saturated roads, take the time to learn this arcane art. Who knows, maybe at some point, you too will have fun driving in the wet.

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

Isuzu achieves highest ranking in RP sales satisfaction study

ISUZU HANDS HIGHEST IN overall new vehicle sales satisfaction in the Philippines, according to the J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2008 Philippines Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) study released recently.

Now on its eighth year, the study has been redesigned for 2008 and examines several factors that contribute to overall satisfaction with sales experiences. In order of importance, these factors are delivery process, delivery timing, salesperson, paperwork, deal, sales initiation and dealer facility.

Highest in 2008

Isuzu ranks highest in 2008, achieving an overall satisfaction index score of 833 on a 1,000-point scale. Isuzu performs particularly well in the areas of delivery timing and paperwork. Kia, included in the study for the first time this year, follows Isuzu in ranking with a score of 840. Also ranking above the industry average are Mitsubishi, Toyota and Mazda, respectively.

The study finds that while 85 percent of customers say they experienced no pressure during the purchase process, when customers report experiencing pressure, SSI scores are 37 points below the industry average.

Pressure

The type of pressure that have the greatest negative effect on customer satisfaction include pressure to purchase a vehicle without the exact options desired by the customer, pressure to buy within the same day, and pressure to accept an inconvenient delivery time. By contrast, where customers experience no pressure during the sales process, satisfaction scores are 7 points higher than the industry average.

"In a pressure-free environment, vehicle buyers are able to make purchase decisions that will ultimately translate into higher levels of satisfaction," said Yuka Kimura, general manager for the Philippines at J.D. Power Asia Pacific, Singapore. "For example, they are not hastened or pushed to accept vehicles that don't meet their needs or expectations. In addition, when customers are able to discuss options with the salesperson, they are less likely to regret their decisions postpurchase," Kimura added.

Promised features

The study also finds that customers expect their vehicles to be delivered with all promised features, and that failure to do so can result in a considerable decline in satisfaction. Among customers whose vehicles do not contain the features they were promised satisfaction scores are 74 points below the industry average. Currently, 3 percent of customers report not receiving their vehicles with the promised features.

"The service standards that most vehicle manufacturers already promote are the range for customer expectations regarding delivery of their new vehicle," Kimura said.

Dealer advocacy

In addition, customer satisfaction with the overall purchase experience has a strong impact on dealer advocacy. Approximately 75 percent of customers who report that they are highly satisfied with their overall experience say they "definitely would" recommend the dealer where they purchased their vehicle to friends and relatives, compared with the industry average of 58 percent. By contrast, 71 percent of highly satisfied customers say they "definitely would" recommend their vehicle make, compared with the industry average of 54 percent.

The 2008 Philippines Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) study is based on the responses of more than 1,400 new vehicle owners who purchased their vehicles between August 2007 and February 2008. The study was fielded between February and April 2008.

The SSI study is one of two consumer-based studies conducted annually in the Philippines by J.D. Power Asia Pacific. The Philippines Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) study, which measures new vehicle owner satisfaction with after-sales dealership service, will be released in late August.

Rainy day bubbles and other car painting myths

MANY FILIPINO CAR OWNERS ARE HESitant to have their cars painted during the rainy season for fear of "bubbles" or "blisters." They think that because of the cold temperature and the moisture in the air, the paint would have bubbles and all the money and effort they spend would just be wasted.

Well, that long-believed notion is not true.

"It's a myth," says Danny Tantoy, owner of The Wet Look, one of the few respected paint shops in the country today. "The weather has nothing to do with the bubbles or blisters on shitty paint jobs. That's the fault of the shop that did the painting."

The brother of racing legend Arthur Tantoy pointed out that bubbles or blisters are caused by solvent popping through the layer of paint, and are the results of the failure of the painter to observe the correct "flash-off time" before spraying the next coat of paint. Flash-off time is the period specified by the paint manufacturer for the solvent or thinner to evaporate. If such is not observed, the solvent is trapped underneath the layer of paint, resulting in a bubble.

'Same quality' myth

Many Filipinos also have a popular notion that all paints are created equal. Well, they are not, and despite globalization, Philippine-made paints are still inferior par compared to polyurethane paints from Europe, the United States and Japan.

The Wet Look, for one, uses an Italian-made polyurethane or 2K paint, and all its materials—from thinner, body filling and primer down to the hardener and topcoat—are imported. According to Tantoy, this is the reason The Wet Look gives a two-year warranty—the longest in the industry. "All freshly painted cars have a glossy look, but only the cars painted at The Wet Look retain that gloss after two years," he said. "That's because all the materials we use are imported," he said.

'Long work' myth

A lot of shops tell customers that a paint job worthy of joining car shows takes months to complete. At The Wet Look, such a quality is achieved in 10 to 14 days.

"We are able to do so because we never engage in guess work. Labor rate—no bidding prole-ish. In fancy shops, re-encrypt fact kind of in any gigawels," Tantoy said.

'Low cost' myth

And finally here is a popular misconception that a good paint job can be had for P20,000 or even less. Tantoy said quality has its price, and more shops that offer low prices acknowledge the job as a labor and-materials basis. The hapless subcontractor, in order to make a little profit, employs unqualified workers and uses the cheapest materials. The result is a paint job that never lasts.

The Wet Look charges a little higher than most shops (numbers for hatchback cars is P35,000) and Tantoy often tells customers short of budget never to hurry and instead save up before having their cars repainted. "Many car owners end up paying more because they choose a P20,000 no-guarantee botched paint job. Usually they go back to us scratching their heads," Tantoy said.

However, for the month of September, Wet Look is giving customers a two chance of experiencing its renowned services. Through its irresistible Wet Look promo, car owners need only to pay P19,999 to have their hatchback cars repainted. For more information, visit The Wet Look's website at www.thewetlook.com.ph.

TOYOTA Fortuner

Install the European style

LIKE IT OR NOT, WHAT PEOPLE SEE AND admire first in a car is not the free-spirited automatic transmission or the luggage space, but the sheer looks of it. Starting soon, however, how people see things may be about to change.

In the last few years, European carmakers, which have always been at the forefront of automotive design, have had a recent shift to the rugged yet still stylish matte look. In the lead are cars like Porsche and Lamborghini, which now offer many designs on its choice of trimmings and finishes.

Matte-finished body kits

Shark, the country's most forward-thinking after-market brand for premium vehicle accessories, lets Filipino car owners enjoy the European look through an exclusive lineup of matte-finished body kits.

Take for example the Toyota Fortuner, for which Shark has its vehicle model-specific exposition that a good paint job can be had for P20,000 or even less. Tantoy said quality has its price, and most shops that offer low prices acknowledge the job as a labor and-materials basis. The hapless subcontractor, in order to make a little profit, employs unqualified workers and uses the cheapest materials. The result is a paint job that never lasts.

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Previewing the '08-'09 Mitsubishi Montero Sport

IF YOU WENT TO THE 2ND PHILIPPINE International Motor Show (PIMS) sometime over the weekend, you may have noticed that one of the first prototype vehicles exhibited was the Mitsubishi Concept MX. You may have not known that it was a sneak preview of the 2008-09 Montero Sport SUV that will be launched by Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC).

In Manila that Friday afternoon, it would premiere at the Mercure Manor Hotel yesterday.

Some of the motoring media who attended the PIMS opening last Thursday instantly recognized Concept MX, two doors of so having been tested by MMPC to run (drive) the new Montero Sport (MS) at the Shin International Racing Circuit near Pattaya, Thailand early this month. Since the event was organized exclusively for journalists from the Philippines, the five MS units there were all left-hand-drive. (In Thailand, motor vehicles are right-hand-drive.)

Wrap

At Shin, each of us was allowed to ride an MS around the racetrack with a Mitsubishi Motors Thailand test driver/expert to the front seat countermen moderating our speed, then coaching us through the simulated off-road sections. The MS' 3.2-litre DOHC, 16-valve turbocharged and intercooled diesel engine, using a state-of-the-art common-rail direct injection system, peaks 160PS at 3,800 rpm and max torque of 360 Nm at 2,000 rpm. The automatic tranny is 4-speed Invecs-II with Sports Mode and ECT while the base Invecs-II 4WD drivetrain feeds maximum torque to the wheels with the most grip for composure on all-road surfaces.

The SUV all-terrain competence was tested when we engaged the Super Select 4WD system and toggled one sequentially past-

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

(tuned, uneven metal ramps that simulated ruggedly uneven off-road conditions. There we had to drive the MS tilted on a skewed wooden structure with the wheels on the left side running on the track and the wheels on the right side negotiating a section that must have been slanted at a 45 degree angle. But there was no driving through a mud pit or climbing over big rocks.

Angles

Nonetheless, there is little doubt that the MS would have passed those off-road tests also, what with its obstacle clearance angles and ride height as per with the 4WD Mitsubishi Pajero. A hybrid-type limited slip differential would help the drivers extract the SUV if and when it is bogged down. The MS has an approach angle of 36 degrees compared to the Pajero Long model's 38.6, departure angle of 23 degrees equal to the Pajero's, ground clearance of 215 mm versus the Pajero's 221 mm, and ramp break-over angle of 21 degrees versus the Pajero's 21.4 degrees.

Speaking of the Pajero, which has been winning the Paris-Dakar Rally every year since 2002, rally driver Hiroshi Masuoka drove a Pajero to victory in the 2002 and 2003 Paris-Dakar, the toughest endurance rally in the world. Riding the MS with champion rally driver Masuoka at the wheel was the most thrilling experience during our day at Shin.

WHETHER THIS all-terrain all-road side motion is on a 45 or 50 degree angle, the MS can take it.

INSIDE, METALLIC controls, two-tone coloring and wood grain inlay

THE 50:50 THIRD-ROW seats fold forward for more cargo space.

THE '08 Montero Sport is longer, wider, taller than its predecessor.

THIS new Montero Sport SUV's ready for test-driving at Shin.

Ladder frame

The MS' all-road capability is bolstered by its new, stiffer ladder-frame chassis-boasting and torsional rigidity to the new ladder frame are much higher than before, reducing vibration transmitted to the body and providing a platform for outstanding performance under the toughest surface conditions while improving handling and ride comfort when driving on smooth surfaces. The new MS is longer, wider, taller than its predecessor and its wheelbase has been upped to 2,800 mm from 2,725 mm, increasing the vehicle's interior space and stability.

Aside from the new ladder frame, the new MS is distinguished by its practical and comfortable interior-one with stain- and water-repellant fabric upholstery. The front bucket and second row 60:40 seats adjust slide and full recline and the 50:50 third row seats double-action hatchward.

SRS AND ABS. Safety features include nine front SRS airbags, ABS with EBD, six OP ELR seatbelts, and OP IsoFix and side-impact beams. Impact-absorbing deformation beads in the frontal frame sections and other active-cushioning elements improve crash worthiness. The brakes on the 17-inch alloy wheels are ventilated discs in front and drums at the rear. The front suspension is a double-wishbone coil spring configuration and the rear has a 5-link coil spring arrangement, with stabilizers here and all.

Although the MS is primarily a durable 4WD SUV in elegant styling makes it suitable for about-town cruising as its cabin is to roomy well-appointed and delivers an refined drive dynamics. Creature comforts include a single in-dash CD/MP3 player with six speakers, USB port and Bluetooth device-pairing function for hands-free communication. The GLS model is priced at P1,400,000 while the spec-up GLS SE sells for P1,600,000.

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Winds are like punishers; they only function when open.

Cut and use to purchase your new SUZUKI motorcycle.

AAP proposes absolute ban on cell phone use while driving

THE AUTOMOTIVE ASSOCIATION Philippines (AAP) is calling for an absolute ban on the use of cell phones while driving a motor vehicle, whether the phones is handheld or hands-free.

Increased reliance on cell phones, the AAP said, has led to a rise in the number of people who use them while driving. The AAP noted that according to the National Telecommunications Commission, the number of mobile phone subscribers in the Philippines has soared from over 22.5 million in 2003 to over 52.3 million in 2007.

12th cause of traffic mishaps

At the same time, the AAP pointed out that in the National Statistical Coordination Board's (NSCB) list that chart on traffic accidents that occurred in the Philippines in 2006, cell phone use while driving ranked as the 12th cause of traffic accidents. From 2001 to 2006, traffic accidents caused by using cell phones while driving increased seven-fold five times, the highest increase among the causes of traffic accidents.

At a recent Senate hearing on road safety, AAP director and AAP road safety committee member David L. Aseron presented the Richard Auto Club's position paper on the issue, appealing several studies on which AAP based its decision to propose a ban on the use of cell phones whether handheld or hands-free, while driving. The studies were conducted by the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Australia's Insurance Institute of Highway Safety, Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Utah.

Aseron said that while using a handheld cell phone is not the only activity that distracts a driver, it could factor a traditionally high level of traffic accidents caused both by physical and mental factors to warrant banning its use while driving.

He added that a hands-free cell phone does not have a significantly lower risk since some physical effort is also exerted to, to use and, more importantly, the distraction it creates is no less than that of a handheld cell phone.

Over 40 countries, states, cities

The AAP said that over 40 countries, states or cities worldwide restrict or ban the use of cell phones while driving, including Australia, Denmark, France, South Korea and Japan. Washington became the first US state to ban DWT (driving while texting) in May 2007 and New Jersey passed a similar law in March 2008 with a $100 fine while New Delhi, India has banned the use of cell phones while driving even with hands-free devices.

Manila was one of the first metropolises in the world to issue a ban when the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) approved MMDA Regulation 97-001 in March 1997 prohibiting the use of cell phones and handheld radios while driving. The cities of Makati and Cebu have also imposed the same ban. However, the AAP observed that the laws are not strictly enforced.

Furthermore, the ban proposed by Senate President Manuel Villar in Senate Bill 96, also known as the Handheld Device Act, is not absolute since it allows motorists to use a cell phone if it has a hands-free device.

AAP hopes that an absolute ban will be legislated in the Philippines for the safety of all road users.

LIFESTYLE Home & Entertaining

Editor Thelma Bisnar San Juan

Zap unwanted hair on BIKINI LINES with LaserLight!

Eric Paras' statement of modern elegance

By Margo C. Enriquez
Contributor

LIKE HIS FAVORITE RUDE, French modernist Jean-Michel Frank, interior and furniture designer Eric Paras is not a minimalist, yet his aesthetic leans toward clean lines but emphasizes the textures of materials and neutral colors such as white, brown and gray. He frets severe, his design style mixes salvages, artworks and found objects from nature with his furniture which are works in underdevelopment.

Paras started out as a furniture designer until he landed up with Randy Virgilio, owner of Vivere Lifestyles, the holding company of Vivere Furnitures, which specializes in products made from gmelina, a sustainable product, and other related businesses such as Industria Living and Trilina Bay.

Paras has always admired Frank's strong lines, punctuated by the sparseness of his designs. Using Frank's pioneer collection as reference, he came up with a new look that emphasizes the geometric and simplicity of materials. The owner named the collection Trilina Bay, after a popular destination in Subic where his family spends weekends.

The Trilina Bay look is for a vacation or a laid-back home which eschews the glamour or formality. Refinement is achieved through the playful mix of disparate accents and the judicious choice of artworks. Paras explains that the Trilina Bay collection uses American white ash because of the market demand. Hardwoods are not only abundant but provide designers more flexibility.

The new collection is displayed on the second floor of A12, the latest nest in Paras' A12-Furniture Gallery which also offers home ware. Visitors are shocked by the understatement of the Trilina Bay collection.

THE SOFA: Paras' take on designer Jean-Michel Frank's rectangular sofa omits a pronounced lip for layered legs. He remakes it with an asymmetrical frame with a side tray.

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MUSIC MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL

MIXING textures, the antique copper-wrapped hurricane lantern, designed by Paras, is playing against the grain of the oil-stained table.

THE TUBULAR steel of the bed canopy is a foil to the heavier bed frame. Leo Almeria's angular table lamp echoes the shape of the bed's canopy. The stainless steel lamp with bamboo cords and a silk shade provides an asymmetrical balance to the composition. The faux fur duvet also echoes the textures of Jacquet's painting. Oh-so-sleek chairs inspired by Jean-Michel Frank spare lines create a conversation corner.

Eric Paras' statement...

From page C1

tion made from textured woods, set against a stark background of dark walls. Paris's maestro Eugenio Jimenez espoused the "less ideas and very good" look. Hence, the furniture vignettes show spareness in detail thus enhancing opportunities of textures. Many of the furniture, eclectic mixes on the simplest possible in design, are given subtle but warm finishes. Yet some can be used for various tasks and shelves are available. The accessories...canopy for some treasures from antique or look—an etcher designed by Parsons for friends.

Shops' touch comes through with the dress designed in raw silk curtains; anchored with geometric chairs and blonky side tables; accessorized with unique lighting sources and progressive artworks, the rooms become statements of modern elegance. Shells are stored in glass apothecary jars; Bamboo motifs is used for votives; plant displays are touches of wild organic on a tall planter or tables leaves and pods in a flat vase.

Ultimately Paras isn't just selling a new furniture collection. He shows pursuing the complete vision; he reminds them that there's got to be room in the space.

A-11 Furniture Gallery is located at 2840 J.B. Fernandez Street, Pasay City. Call 8529972 or 0917-8562686.

THE CORNER is highlighted up by a bamboo console with a marble top and a mirror with frame, framed of a combination of brown, metal photos make an interesting wall pattern. The round carousel of the hallway contrast the angularity of the furniture and accessories in the study/dining room. Rectangular-framed chairs with woven leather strips complement the expandable white tabletable. Triangular lanterns make a powerful center piece. The industrial lamp and Eugenio Jacquet's mixed-media work add a contemporary touch.

THE WOOD AND GRAY color scheme is made interesting with such textures as the woven leather chairs, subtly accentuated with sheen for depth, and the oak dining table and chairs each at the hurricane lamp and the truck lamps shaped like a cube. Patterns in Jacquet's artwork break up the monotony of solid colors.

THE ROUGHNESS of the ebony-stained tongue-flooring, the modernity of the chocolate ceiling, white and architect's walls, punctuated by Eugenio Jacquet's multimedia abstraction emphasize the simplicity and DIY/World quality of the white oak mahogany-acting desk, the classic wood-backed chairs with hermosa fabric in charcoal, the watercolor metal chandelier and a reworked period table lamp.

THIS decoration idea will keep your dangling beads and baubles from getting tangled together.

Do-it-yourself

Frame your earrings

With Ariana Barreiro and Marissa Lapa

KEEPING, STORING AND ORGANIZING earrings can be made convenient with this clever idea. All you need is a frame and wire mesh. If you want to further enhance the appearance, add fabric and craft paper and glue it on the frames' backing.

This easy and decorative idea will not only save space on your desk or dresser, it will also help keep your dangling beads and baubles from getting tangled together. It's also an organized way of keeping track of your accessories so you don't misplace them.

Have fun and be creative. This "accessory frame" can match your room. The frame, size, shape and design should be considered. Take the glass portion of the frame out. Use the backing guide to perfectly cut the size of the wire mesh.

As an added design feature, look for coordinating patterns or accent colors in fabrics, decorative papers, etc. Glue on to the frames' backing. When this is done, fit the backing again into the frame and you're all set to hang your earrings.

The frame becomes a great decorative accessory on your dresser or table. You can even create several different sizes, shapes and designs. Create a group or composition on top of your table.

If you have a collection of several earrings, get a bigger frame or several big frames if needed, and hang them on the wall. Not only does it serve its function, it becomes a design element in your dressing room or area of choice.

**Frames from IKE and Landmark Trade Center*

D.I.Y. DO IT YOURSELF

AS an added design feature, look for coordinating patterns or accent colors in fabrics, decorative papers, etc.

Sticky problems for consumers

THE CONSUMER
Linda A. Bolido

WHY DO STORES PUT PRICE TAGS over important product information like ingredients, expiry date, directions, etc.?

It is bad enough that product labels are written in the tiniest font available that even if you have 20/20 vision you would still need your chair-will magnify the words a hundred-fold to find out what you are getting.

But stores also mind-lessly stick price tags usually where there is important information that consumers have to know despite the availability of open spaces that will not get in the way of a client's finding out what he/she needs to know about a product.

This practice is particularly risky if the buyer wants to try something that has just become available to the market. Consumers with allergies and other health problems have to be very careful about what they buy.

They do not want to get something that might contain ingredients they should avoid if they do not want to have serious health problems.

People with peanut allergies, for instance, can have life-threatening attacks just by ingesting the smallest amounts of the product. In fact, just smelling peanuts can already cause severe adverse reactions for those with very serious allergies.

This is why many schools in the United States have adopted the controversial policy of not allowing students to bring in items with peanut in them, like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, to avoid inadvertently exposing children with allergies.

Certain chemicals contained in some products may also affect consumers seriously. They could be harmful to people taking certain medicines or might react violently with other products already in use.

Taking out the price tag relieves you get home to try to read the fine print does not solve the problem. The glue is usually so strong that if you try removing the price tag you only compound the problem. A huge chunk of the label often goes with the sticker that you are left with even less information.

I do not think putting the price tag somewhere where it does not get in the way of consumer information will add that much more to the work store employees already do. After all, they already stick all those labels to thousands of products so why can't they just take a little extra time to turn the products around a little bit and make sure the tags land on empty spaces?

Instead of mindlessly sticking the price tag, like they are pinning the evil on a donkey while blindfolded, they can take just a little extra care to make sure they do not cover anything important.

Feedback

Reader Vina Manalang complains that buckets of almost everything, but particularly shampoos and conditioners, are so hard to open. Without a pair of scissors or knife to tear the package open, she has to use her teeth.

Marianne also has some suggestions to manufacturers to make things easier for consumers. Careless tissue rolls, she points out, is stored in round dispensers so the "starter" sheet, the first piece that you pull out to start the process, should be easy to take from the outset.

She also wishes manufacturers will in bottles of cooking oil with a flow regulator. As for ginger packs, she suggests that packagers should open on the side of the crunch and not the waist part for more convenience.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5000 Chino Roces Ave. cor. Ayala ave. Makati, Tel. 1204 Makati City; fax 897-4703/897 or e-mail lbolido@inq.net.com.ph

KEYED. supervises the outdoor catering for lunch but she is dead weather, the 100% service was missed indoors.

A garden party . . .

From page C1

treat with cuttings, make sure there's enough moisture to hold back the water.

Nurses them. That's your way of giving back to the plants for the service they are providing. Talk to plants. Always compliment them by saying, "You look pretty today" "See how they respond.

Ging de los Reyes

Ging de los Reyes of the Flower Farm, grew up in a sugarcane plantation in Negros which also had a horticultural garden.

When she was building her own home in Tagaytay in the late '70s, she envisioned it to be a Tuscan country-style cottage, brightened up by baskets of fresh flowers in front door, plants were arranged only in Quiapo. When she put the flowers in her vases, arrang would come out.

So los Reyes then cultivated orchids, roses and azaleas.

"When I did it on my own, I didn't know anything about lighting on short days and covering the plants with black fabric and plants on long days. I was happy to eat and just on my own. As I grew more, my son told me to make it into a business. I didn't want to part with the flowers. He makes give to friends as gifts," she says. Today, Flowers Farm is a major supplier to shops.

Hot tips

For a compost insecticide, take red pepper in a blender and dilute it with water and Voila, so that the plant doesn't burn.

Why plant in the first place?

To Ricky Reyes and the guests at the luncheon, gardening is nature's balm. It's efficacy has to do with the surrounding green, a restful color.

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REYES crosses over the bridge made from antique railroad tracks in his tropical garden.

FOUNDER First Lady Ming Ramos (first row, third from left) graces the Makati Garden Club meeting.

A garden party

By Margie Enriquez
Contributor

AS THE GARDEN THEMSELVES intrigued, pondering on the various colors, shapes, textures and scents [unclear] organic and conservation enthusiasts.

This was the common sentiment expressed by members and friends of the Makati Garden Club. Celebrity hairdresser and TV host Ricky Reyes entertained the garden enthusiasts in his Old World-style home, surrounded by a tropical garden. The affair was graced by the divas of gardening—former first lady Amelita Ramos, Nena Nera Rufino and Ging de los Reyes.

During a group sharing, Reyes likened gardening to handwriting, both of which are an art born derived from cutting, shaping and mixing colors.

The focal point in Reyes' garden is a pergola overlooking the sunken-designed swimming pool. Acacia and Indian trees border the property so that the branches would cover the view of his neighbors, hence, enhancing the privacy. A trellis and walkway lined with old railroad tracks, stone pebbles and boulders is draped with tropical foliage. "There are gardenia oil drops, bougainvillea, oak, fukuien's vine, flowers, vines double and ground orchids.

Reyes said it's not the price of the plant but how one arranges that makes a garden special.

One of his valuable insights came from Ramos on how gardening holds therapy. "Has one's grass leaves, relaxes you're angry. Gardening calms you down and makes you generic," he said.

Ming Ramos

An octogenarian, Ramos is still active in consultant for the guidance office of the International School high school and art foundations such as Ballet Philippines. In her younger days, she's always been associated with gardening and an orchid was even named after her.

Her love for plants was inspired by a visit to a farmer B teacher's home in Anaheim, California who had an abundant garden. Overwhelmed by his collection, she started cultivating orchids in her backyard. When a pilot friend would come home with plants and seeds, she'd center at his place as early as 7 a.m.

THE FAMOUS sunken swimming pool dedicated to Reyes' mother so that they can welcome the sun every day.

Mrg's Garden, her plant shop along Aguinaldo highway in Tagaytay, was originally a pineapple and coffee farm. Since pineapples took 18 months to harvest, Ramos decided to collect plants without telling her husband. Today, it is a popular destination for landscape artists and gardeners. Ground covers are the most salable. Mini chrysanthemums, bromeliads and ferns are also popular.

"Gardening teaches you to be patient. When you plant, it won't grow right away. You appreciate what nature is all about," she said.

Her tips for beginners:

- Start with easy plants like the philodendron. Cut it or put it in water and it will grow even inside the house. There's no need for a fertilizer.
- Prune plant ground covers and palmerse are also easy to cultivate. If the palmerse gets too bushy, you can split it in half.
- When bromeliads have new growings, cut them once the mother plant. Although the bromeliad doesn't need to be watered daily, make sure there is water at the center of the plants everyday.
- For natural insecticides, spray aphids with soapy water.

Nena Perez Rubio

Nena Perez Rubio is one of the stalwarts of the Makati Garden Club. As young as 8 years old, her father would introduce her to species of plants. She also introduced the native bougainvillea to the States which is enjoying popularity. Rubio has also done landscapes for prominent personalities such as Andres Soriano and Antero Soriano.

Advice for beginners:

- Grow annuals for a small garden and bougainvillea for a medium-size garden.

J.GARDEN/11

ENTERTAINMENT

Kailangan ba ng Okasyon para mag-cake?
Hawaiian Roll
Pampalamig ng araw-araw

Dingdong in 'Sexiest Men' show

DINGDONG DANTES' CHARMS are too awesome to be confined locally. Now he's set to conquer the world as one of TV channel E!'s "25 Sexiest Men in the World."

Brian N. Pastor, E! Entertainment's Rights and Clearances Supervisor, says Dingdong manager Perry Lansigan this letter:

"We are currently producing a television program called 'Sexiest Men of the World' (the Production) where we will feature 25 of the fantastic males in the world. As part of the Production, we have decided to include Dingdong Dantes as one of the 25 Sexiest Men of the World! The list is still being processed but we can tell you as of the date of this letter that we have ordered the following males: Gilles Marini (France); Kostas Martakis (Greece); Michael Lewis (Israel); Ben Cartis (New Zealand); and David Beckham (UK).

"Here is the series' description: Young, female celebrantoes may be what you're used to seeing on cover stands, but when it comes to appreciating the insatiable appetite of the world, you've got to serve up the hottest most delectable dishes imaginable!

"We scour the entire globe searching for the sexiest hunk-

DOLLY WOOD
Daily Arrow Carnegie

hard bodies and delicious divas that can melt you with their voice and smash you with their dazzling sex appeal!

"We'll also discuss much else can capture your attention in a flash, pit-ups with deadly scores, heroic bachelors with all the right moves and their wives and girlfriends who bask in beauty."

Sexiest GF

Dong's GF Kaitlin is elated. "So dear makes me the sexiest GF on earth [laughs]." E hastened, "More than Dong's physical traits, it's his taking done out to do things that make a difference, like the basketball league he organized on help people. He's not vain. He thinks of others first before himself. For me, that's what makes a man."

Dong is still bedagged from his trip to New York, but the good news jolted him out of his drowsiness. "It's almost surreal. It and I love watching those concentrators on E! and now I'm part of it."

Sir Dong, a good sense of humor is what makes a woman stay. Advice to us sexy men on how to woo women? "When you meet a woman, I should come from the core of your personality," Dong said. "Never pretend to be something you're not. What matters to that you are unique, rather than going with the stereotypes."

Dong has beaten all types odds to get even trying. What makes Dong stand out from the rest is that he's not stuck up at all. With E!'s recognition, he is truly on top of the world!

Got my PLDT dsl!

I had a blast at PLDT myDSL clothing event in Greenhills Dimsum Market last Aug. 16.

It was an awesome night, speed and sound trip just like what the country's top telecom company's broadband subscribers experience every time they log on to their "DSL world."

The fastest growing online sport is featured in the movie "Tokyo Drift." It's for those with cars and money to burn. Drifters never get tired of buying new tires, basically,

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GALLERIA

1 THE MUMMY: TOMB of the DRAGON EMPEROR	6 DEATH RACE
2 FOR THE FIRST TIME	7 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE
3 MUTANT CHRONICLES	8 IndaSine: QUICKIE
4 SMOTHER	9 SHANDALO
5 BIG STAN	10 DOBOL TROBOL

ERMITA

1 DEATH RACE	
2 MUTANT CHRONICLES	8 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE
3 FOR THE FIRST TIME	7 MOONWISE FILM FESTIVAL
4 BIG STAN / DOBOL TROBOL	9 SHANDALO
5 SMOTHER	9 DOBOL TROBOL

METRO EAST

1 BIG STAN	5 FOR THE FIRST TIME
2 FOR THE FIRST TIME	6 MUTANT CHRONICLES
3 DEATH RACE	7 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE
4 THE MUMMY 3	8 DOBOL TROBOL

NOVALICHES

1 FOR THE FIRST TIME	3 TOROTOT
2 DOBOL TROBOL	4 DEATH RACE

PIONEER

1 FOR THE FIRST TIME	3 SMOTHER
2 MUTANT CHRONICLES	4 DEATH RACE

STA. ROSA	LIPA
1 FOR THE FIRST TIME	1 THE X-FILES
2 DOBOL TROBOL	2 FOR THE FIRST TIME
3 TOROTOT	3 DOBOL TROBOL
4 DEATH RACE	4 MY SASSY GIRL

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1 FOR THE FIRST TIME	1 FOR THE FIRST TIME
2 TOROTOT	2 TOROTOT
3 DOBOL TROBOL	3 DOBOL TROBOL
4 DEATH RACE	4 DEATH RACE

ANGELES

1 FOR THE FIRST TIME	3 MY SASSY GIRL
2 DEATH RACE	4 THE FLOOD / ALTERED

STARMILLS

1 FOR THE FIRST TIME	4 MY SASSY GIRL
2 DEATH RACE	5 THE FLOOD
3 BOGUI	6 ALTERED

BACOLOD	ILOILO
1 FOR THE FIRST TIME	1 THE X-FILES
2 THE X-FILES	2 FOR THE FIRST TIME
3 TOROTOT	3 BOGUI
4 ALTERED	4 TOROTOT
5 WALL • E	5 WALL • E
6 LOST in BEIJING	6 LOST IN BEIJING

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2 STAR WARS - THE CLONE WARS

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3 FOR THE FIRST TIME

4 DEATH RACE

12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

SMOTHER

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www.shangcineplex.com

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DEATH RACE - R13

FOR THE FIRST TIME

BIG STAN - R13

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GLORIETTA 1	1		2		3	A VERY SPECIAL LOVE	4	FOR THE FIRST TIME
GLORIETTA 4	1	WALL-E	2		3		
	4	BIG STAN	5		6	FOR THE FIRST TIME	7	SMOTHER
GREENBELT 1	1	DEATH RACE	2	FOR THE FIRST TIME				
GREENBELT 3	1	SMOTHER	2	DEATH RACE				
	3	WALL-E	4	BIG STAN	5	FOR THE FIRST TIME		
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1	FOR THE FIRST TIME	2	DEATH RACE				
	3		4	WALL-E	5	SMOTHER		
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1	DEATH RACE	2		3	WALL-E	4	LOVERS' VOW
MARKET! MARKET!	1	FOR THE FIRST TIME	2					
	3	DEATH RACE	4		5	SMOTHER		
TRINOMA	1	FOR THE FIRST TIME	2	FOR THE FIRST TIME	3	SMOTHER	4	
	5	WALL-E	6	BIG STAN	7	DEATH RACE		

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

- Glorietta — BODY SHOP's AUTUMN MAKE UP COLLECTION — August 28, Activity Center
- Greenbelt — SHOPPERS SPREE AT WEEKENDS — August 15 - October 19
- Alabang Town Center — Laguna Days — August 28 - 31, Activity Center
- Ayala Center Cebu — Tourist Incentive Awarding — August 27, 6:30PM, Activity Center
- Market! Market! — Rock The Street Intercollegiate Dance Competition — August 30, Activity Center
- Omnilife — Exposing Philippines presents Dance to WILLOW 10 — August 31 to December 31, 2008
- Ayala Malls Manila Bay — Zone Iconic Botanical Paintings from the BPA Collection on view until Aug 31
- Trinoma — Home Decorating & Feng Shui Workshop — Aug. 27 4pm, 3rd Level Workshop Space (near Power Mac)
- Trinoma — Eight Picks — Eight Fashion Picks from Young Designers — Aug. 28 Sept. 6, 4th Level Cinema Lobby

GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS

JL LITAN BY JELLI MIRAYA

TULDOK BY RAMIR COLL

FLESH BANOY BY RYL JUSICO

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

MANGKOSMOS BY JOSHUA TEJIDO

SALAWAHI BY DANNY PEREZ

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

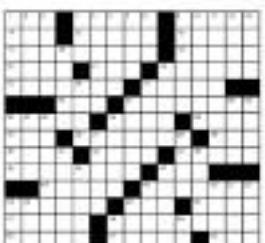
ATOMO AND WIDGY BY LISA GARCELLANO

LOVEBUNTS BY ELIZABETH CHONGUO

RIKO MACHINE BY MARK ADRIAN

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DIANO

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu By Dave Green

			7	5	4	3	9	2
			2					1
			3					5
			5					6
			9					3
	1	2	6			7	5	4
3			8		6			9
7			4		2			8
	8	9				6	4	

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	9	4	2	6	7	5	3	1
5	6	2	3	1	9	7	8	4
3	7	1	4	8	5	9	2	6
4	2	8	7	5	3	1	9	8
1	3	9	6	2	8	4	5	7
7	5	8	1	9	4	2	6	3
2	4	7	5	3	6	8	1	9
6	8	5	9	7	1	3	4	2
9	1	3	8	4	2	6	7	5

Dingdong in 'Sexiest Men' show

From page E1

drifting is getting your car sideways, down a road. Sounds a lot like power sliding huh? Well it isn't.

It's much more complex. Instead of a skilled crossing a drift and then countering to straighten out, he will instead overcorrect so the car goes into uncontrolled drift. Then the crossover many drifters do it to the uncreative, because there are many ways being to perform.

So, to summary, a good drifter has the ability to take flat or the opposing turns without having to recline at any point in time.

Drifting

Drift King Dave Hitchcock and the undisputed champion of the 2007 season, **Alex Pryor** crowned Excursion with their awesome drifting skills.

Dave is the man behind Kingdong Exumo on chase scenes in his Mad-ed ad and the drifting sequences in "Extending" before.

Dave's drifting related (EMC) has celebrity clientele like **Judy Ann Santos, Ryan Agoncillo, Marc Nelson, Bath Tremoro** and **Bryan Revilla**.

"If Did **Lani Mercado** was horrified when her son, Bryan joined the circle," Dave revealed, "but when she saw how cute it is, gone in 60 secs.

"My drift car is my new GF because she any thrill that it gives me and no pain ya," Bryan said. "Drifting is part of my lifestyle. Plus browsing ladies a lot, so I can watch videos of drifters on how to execute moves."

Mr. cut's goal for great speed reflects the need for the Internet scores via PLDT myDSL DW99 only, with up to 1Mbps and unlimited DSL plan bandwidth.

Music sensation!

Sunny Castillejos, who has represented her self and is now known as music sensation **Sunny Jean**, joined the Speed Circuit race that raised other key cities like Cebu and Pampanga. Heard that Sunny's new love is a series of a promising star in Davao. No wonder she extended her stay in Davao Republic.

The DJ Belles made the event more sweet as **DE Stallion** and **Rob Bridgeport** of Hiller fire gave away cool prizes to the crowd. There was also a photo contest to capture the thrill of the event.

A final encounter between drifting experts and enthusiasts is set to roll, the Greenhills open parking space on Aug. 30. Get a chance to bitch with Dave and Alex as they do the 360-degree kick. Pig out it, Stevens & 360 with door open.

I'll leave out on motivation for my DVT (drop vein thrombosis). I would have taken a joyride with the drifting gurus. Try everything once. Guess they say need for speed [strikethrough] and [strikethrough] or an exciting new thing like drifting or even speed dating?

After-party

The jampacked Speed Circuit After-Party in Davao anchored by Manila's premier house and R&B DJs **Rockk, Kim Ramos** and **Marlon** was attended by vibrant party-goers who live in the fast lane and surf on the hot PLDT myDSL line. As they promote car drifting, the premiere phone company also secures subscribers of always getting their daily fixed myworld-mobil-ering.

PERSONAL: Thanks a ton to my fab "mobi-ta-tita" **Bisley Pizarro** and **Lan Sallvaris**, my newfound friends from PLDT **Myla Villanueva**, **Tony Valdez** and **Gary Dejade** for a splendid weekend in Davao. It was just an overnight trip but I had an overdose of good times (not to mention, I was wrecked, too).

E-mail avalentinglobo@yahoo.com

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

OPENING TODAY

Another
Stars: Diane Kruger, Liv Tyler, Ben Shepard, Jon Hensley, Mike White, Selma Blair
Directed by: Grant Gillespie
Unemployed physical therapist (Shepard) has his hands full dealing with his overbearing mom (Kruger), his fellow cop wife (Tyler) and her free-loading cousin (White). Good intentions of "At the Movies" spokes Joel Siu-Gonzalez: "Another flat film marred without much substance." Jake Wilson of The Age agrees: "It has its share of cute, unlikely jokes." Louise Keller of Urban Cinefile says: "It's light-hearted and easy for the most part."

Tambolista
Stars: Kim Molina, Coco Martin, Sid Lucero, Anita Linda, Ricky Davao, Susan Africa
Directed by: Adolf Alix Jr.
Teenager Jason (Molina) dreams of starting a drum set. Will he set aside his own dreams to help his brother and a friend who are in trouble? An entry in last year's Cinema One Originals, this digital drama was screened in Rotterdam, Munich, Barcelona, Jessica Cinema Asiatico Nuevo de Madrid and Seoul's Jeonju fest. It received 13 nominations in this year's Gawad Urian awards. Exclusively in theaters Robinsons Galleria.

The Gravedancers
Stars: Dominic Purcell, Claire Kramer, Josie Maran, Shawn Thomas
Directed by: Mike Mendez
A sweaty gang heists a party in a cemetery—and illegally disturbing underdead spirits in the process. Stars Sean Jacques of Bloody Disgusting concurs on that the "script is meh and clunky, the performances, surprisingly solid." Staci Layne Wilson of Shockya.com concurs: "The plot mirrors a good, old-fashioned ghost story." Felix Vasquez Jr. of Cinema Crazed calls it "a scary, well-directed, fresh, gun, sword with its claws."

For the First Time
Stars: KC Concepcion, Richard Gutierrez, Candy Pangilinan, Pilar Pilapil, Phillip Salvador
Directed by: Joyce Bernal
While vacationing in Montreal, Greece, a reckless playboy (Gutierrez) meets and falls in love with a prim and proper lass (Concepcion). Will they prove that opposites attract or clash in the end? Director Bernal is impressed with her young stars: "They worked hard and had great attitude on the set."

KC Concepcion and Richard Gutierrez

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